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J. M. W. TURNER

MASTER-PAINTERS
OF THE WORLD

Painted 1815.

Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1815.

CROSSING THE BROOK

In the National Gallery.

J.M.W. TURNER

1775 – 1851

By

HARRY TOWNEND

1923

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY

NEW YORK

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GAINSBOROUGH

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

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INTRODUCTION

THE romantic figures of the great Renaissance artists found no counterparts in the painters of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Even to-day, when the adventure of life is coloured by the remembrance of recent national trial and danger, the artist lives a comparatively secluded existence, and his excitements are more mental and emotional than physical. The reason is to be sought, not so much in the changed circumstances of his outward life, as in his inner and psychical attitude towards art. The Renaissance artist might be, and often was, painter, goldsmith, architect, engineer, poet, and soldier. He was interested in every aspect of the life around him, and he expressed that interest in terms of art in a variety of ways. He was a citizen of the world who happened to be an artist. The material lay in ample measure ready to his hand, demanding interpretation and expression. A new scholarship opened to him the gates of the past; the thoughts, the legends, the mythology, the history, of ancient and cultured peoples. The times in which he lived presented to him military glory, political development, and state and civic magnificence. A church whose power and grandeur had reached the highest point commanded universal belief and submission.

All this the artist was called upon to enrich, to illustrate, and to record. The uncertainty of greatness, constant rivalry and emulation, nation against nation, city against city, and party against party, gave that stimulation to life and endeavour, and that possibility of high renown and reward which roused the fury of the soul and made men capable of anything. And all was picturesque because wealth and power flaunted themselves in church and palace; costume and weapon; and every adjunct which might be used to glorify and make handsome and luxurious the life of mankind. The attitude, then, of the artist to his art, and the citizen to the artist, was to employ them with the object of rendering beautiful the outward appearances of things.

The modern artist, on the other hand, has lived in different but no less

stirring times. In the early nineteenth century, the growth of industry and of mechanical invention; the rise and fall of nations and their extension in colonies; exploration and the discovery of new sources of wealth, again provided material for artistic, or at least pictorial, expression. But as the circumstances were different, the subjects for the artist were also of another character. Religion was less a matter of pomp and splendour, and more a matter of reasoned conviction. Military glory was less spectacular, and political power more the result of diplomacy. Civic importance concerned itself to a greater extent with the health and comfort of the people at large and with their education and enfranchisement, and in place of the new learning there was substituted the new science. And this led to an extension from the concern of mankind about men to the concern of mankind about man. Nature was no longer the more or less distant background before which men strutted and struggled : it became the mysterious source of man's origin and of his power. The researches into natural science caused a perception of fitness and beauty which had hitherto lain dormant. The poetry of Wordsworth, the novels of Sir Walter Scott, revealed the wonder and beauty which surrounded human life, and showed how small man was compared with the great elemental forces with which he had to contend. It was for the artist to express this beauty and mystery of Nature and its relation to the life of humanity.

The appreciation of landscape for its own sake, and the employment of it by the artist as symbolic material for his feeling about life, was the distinguishing feature of art in the early years of the nineteenth century, and it was largely a feature peculiar to the art of our own country. The artist was not less conscious of the surge of human activity around him than was his confrère of the Renaissance, but he began to see beyond humanity to the greater life behind. His inspiration came from a wider field; he had learned to think deeply as well as to feel. In reflecting his own times, as it is the duty and the privilege of the painter to do, he showed the image of the inner as well as the outer man, and those things which affected his spirit as well as his body. And so he became a specialist. So vast was the field for expression, and so numerous and complicated the forms which that expression might take, that the painter not only became separate from the architect, the sculptor, and the designer, but the landscape painter from the portrait or historical painter, and even the water-colour painter from the oil-painter.

Though a gradual growth, and not a revolution, this movement towards the painting of pure landscape received its most powerful impulse from the generation of artists which included Constable and Turner. Before them there had been landscape painters, among them one of the greatest of all, Claude Lorrain, and notably the Dutch artists of the seventeenth century; but the range was limited, and the object less universal. The Dutch painters were content to record the flat plains and estuaries of their own country, seen under the oft-repeated conditions of spreading sky and moist atmosphere; they did not compel Nature to their own moods, nor study her under all the varying conditions of light. Humbly and reverently they made a faithful portrait of her appearance so far as they were technically able, and connected that appearance with human life simply and unimaginatively. Claude, on the other hand, was imaginative, but formal and constrained. But Turner and Constable sought for her most intimate secrets, and Turner wove those secret details into the most glowing poems that the art of painting has ever produced. They added, the one truth, the other temperament, to the art of landscape painting; one ever analysing, the other ever constructing.

Great though they were, and still unsurpassed, the art of landscape painting has progressed and altered since their day. Constable's most earnest endeavour was so to become acquainted with the constituents of the scene that he should be able to reproduce the actual illusion of Nature; his art was representative, and continued to be so to the last. From him sprang the school of Impressionists, who were more concerned with the conditions of our seeing—the light, the atmosphere, the reflections from surfaces—than with the things seen, but it was still representation, still illusion, that was their aim; not a temperamental effect in the mind of the spectator, so much as the crystallization of a rapid survey of Nature on the part of the painter. In our day many painters have detached themselves altogether from illusion and representation, and have become symbolists, using recollections of natural appearance not realistically, but with the intention of expressing emotion about Nature, or of causing a repetition of mood. Our younger painters and sculptors have arrived at a point from which there would appear to be no further advance without discarding what has hitherto stood for the language of art; that is, an imitation of natural objects sufficiently close to be intelligible to the person who views the picture, and the conditions under which the objects are seen—light, shadow, and colour—arranged in a

somewhat formal order. The artist has modified the forms and colours of Nature until resemblance has been reduced to the lowest extreme and suggestion expanded to the highest. Selection of essential matter has been so severe as to appear at times to be without connexion.

Again, since the time of Constable, painting has increased its province; it has invaded the realms of music and of literature; while perhaps, in doing so, it has found expression for feelings which those other arts had left inarticulate. The greater depth and subtlety which the best of recent art has acquired has been applied to express feeling about a still greater variety of subjects. No longer is beauty the end of the painter's search, nor is even character the exclusive object; it would seem that the artist is aiming at a philosophy of the universe in pictorial terms. The symbols of the painter —form, colour, light and shade, composition, and so on—withdrawn from representation are employed in the most abstract manner, like sound in music—controlled by harmony, counterpoint, and rhythm—to induce emotions and ideas not communicable in words nor by any other means. So far have we advanced from the point at which the Impressionists left the art of painting—the painting of the physical conditions of our seeing—that we now find attempted a reproduction of the state of mind under which things are seen, the psychical rather than the physical conditions of our seeing. And this all promises a greater power for art, and is therefore to be patiently studied until comprehension is reached.

To return, therefore, to the subject from which a digression has been made, if the life of an artist in modern times is uneventful in the sense of social and physical adventure, there is compensation in intellectual and spiritual enterprise, and painting has been developed and adapted in order to express it. If we would look for the artist whose expansion of tradition has led art upon this road, we shall find him in Joseph Mallord William Turner, in whose work the trend and modification of modern painting is foreshadowed. He, the greatest of classical painters, the most reverent of tradition, the imitator and rival of former masters in their own particular styles, was also the innovator and experimentalist, whose discoveries and developments led to the modern conception. Still in the opinion of large numbers of our countrymen the foremost landscape painter in the history of art, still the object of study and admiration on the part of artists of all schools, Turner offers a fruitful field for the critic, the expositor and the

historian of painting. This book will find a niche for itself if it performs one of these functions, and that the least imposing in its results. To point out some of the beauty to be found in Turner's pictures, and to exhibit the various phases of his career, with an effort to trace the permanence of his principles and their employment by modern artists, is the object of the writer.

Criticism of the art of Turner has occupied many gifted pens, and has been the starting-point for many deductions of the principles of painting. The mightiest of all art-critics has devoted to him his most eloquent pages; and though, as the artist himself is said to have remarked, Mr. Ruskin put ideas into his head he had never conceived (Thornbury), it is the most marvellous analysis of the work of any artist which has ever been written. In regard to biography, however, though there are many books, there is only one source; that is, "The Life and Correspondence of J. M. W. Turner, R.A., founded on letters and papers furnished by his friends and Fellow-Academicians," by Walter Thornbury, first published in 1862. All the main facts regarding the life of Turner are drawn from that work, in this, as in other biographies. But though it contains much that is valuable, it is badly arranged, and the narrative is not at all consecutive. On the whole, so little is known concerning the private life of the artist—and that little is so wanting in intimacy—that it has been thought advisable in this work to give a strict chronological sequence to the material. This method, though of use to the general reader who wishes to gather his facts in the shortest and easiest way, has a peculiar disadvantage if the pictures are to be discussed at the same time, owing to the anticipation of, and the reversion to, later and earlier styles of painting, characteristic of Turner. Biography, therefore, has been separated from exposition, and it is hoped greater freedom has been gained thereby, as well as assistance afforded to the reader in forming an estimate of the man and his work.

The following books, to which the writer is indebted, will be found useful by the general reader as well as by the student. Thornbury has already been mentioned; Ruskin, "Modern Painters"; Wedmore, "Turner and Ruskin"; Hamerton, "Life of Turner"; Monkhouse, "Turner" (Great Artists' Series); Armstrong, "Turner"; Rawlinson, Turner's "Liber Studiorum," and "The Engraved Work of J. M. W. Turner"; Phythian, "Turner"; Finberg, "Drawings of the Turner Bequest"; and the Catalogue of the Turner Collection at Millbank.

J. M. W. TURNER

From the Portrait by Himself in the National Gallery.

J. M. W. TURNER

CHAPTER I

Early Life and Work (1775-1801)

ON August 29, 1773, there took place the marriage of two humble and undistinguished persons, though of respectable ancestry, which was responsible for the appearance upon this earth of one whose incomparable genius has shed an undying lustre upon the art of his native land. These persons were William Turner and Mary Marshall. William Turner was by trade or profession a barber, and was aged 28; his parents had lived their lives at South Molton, in Devonshire. Mary Marshall was the sister of a butcher at Brentford, and tradition has it that she was descended from the Marshalls of Shelford Manor, Nottingham. At the time of her marriage she was aged 34; thus there was some disparity in years between the two, and this may not have been without its effect upon the character of their famous son. That son, Joseph Mallord William Turner, was born on April 23, 1775, at a house in Maiden Lane, Covent Garden, which, according to Sir Walter Armstrong, was pulled down in 1821.

It is worthy of remark that in the year of Turner's birth, two months earlier, was born Thomas Girtin, the early friend and honest rival of Turner, destined to have a profound influence upon his art. It may be further noted that at this time J. R. Cozens, an unconscious director of the bent of Turner's youthful mind, was 23 years of age; Paul Sandby, whose work also was to be influential in the foundation of his style, was 43; and Thomas Hearne, a similar, though more accomplished, topographical artist, was 31. Sir Joshua Reynolds, the hero and very autocrat of painting of the period, was 52; William Hogarth had only been dead eleven years, his fame still the inspiration of artists; Gainsborough was at the height of his reputation; Constable was to be born in the following year.

Thus, in the midst of the first assemblage of our British school of

painting, this surpassing master stepped upon the stage. We shall not discover in heredity the secret of this master's genius. His father is described as "a chatty old fellow; he talked fast, and his words acquired a peculiar transatlantic twang from his nasal enunciation. His cheerfulness was greater than that of his son; and a smile was always on his countenance." In money matters he was mean, and his son said that "he never praised me for anything but saving a halfpenny." In appearance, he had "small blue eyes, parrot nose, projecting chin, and a fresh complexion indicative of health, which he apparently enjoyed to the full." This description refers to William Turner in his old age. From the same source is taken the following reference to the painter's mother : "In an unfinished portrait of her by her son, which was one of his first attempts, my informant perceived no mark of promise; the portrait was not wanting in force or decision of touch, but the drawing was defective. There was a strong likeness to Turner about the nose and eyes; her eyes being represented as blue, of a lighter hue than her son's; her nose acquiline, and the nether lip having a slight fall. Her hair was well frizzed—for which she might have been indebted to her husband's professional skill—and it was surmounted by a cap with large flappers. Her posture therein was erect, and her aspect masculine, not to say fierce; and this impression of her character was confirmed by report, which proclaimed her to have been a person of ungovernable temper, and to have led her husband a sad life. Like her son, her stature was below the average. Towards the end of her days she became insane, and was in confinement; and from her, Turner might have inherited his melancholy turn of mind. Mr. Trimmer, however, never saw her, never heard him mention her, nor ever heard of anyone who had seen her." Mr. Cosmo Monkhouse adds to this the information that "she was the younger sister of Mrs. Harpur, the wife of the curate of Islington." He has also ascertained that "one, Mary Turner, from St. Paul's, Covent Garden," was admitted into Bethlehem Hospital in 1800, and discharged in the following year.

These meagre details relating to the parents of Turner serve only to increase the wonder with which his genius, in common with the genius of many other celebrated men, must always be regarded. In his case it seemed to be of a spontaneous growth, fertilized rather by the ferment of the times than the resulting combination of parental qualities. It seems certain, however, that Turner's life, especially his social life, was rendered unhappy

by the character and circumstances of his mother's affliction; though, on the other hand, the devotion of his parsimonious father provided for him many compensations.

Turner's tendency towards painting was early evidenced, and Thornbury relates an interesting anecdote in this connexion. About the year 1780, Turner, senior, was instructed to go to the house of a City jeweller, Mr. Tomkinson, in order to dress his hair. During the operation the boy, who had accompanied his father, was attracted by a silver salver (emblazoned with the owner's arms) which stood upon a piece of furniture in the room. On his return home, he retired for a time, and appearing after some hours, produced a drawing of an heraldic lion, evidently the result of his observation of Mr. Tomkinson's salver. This is the earliest recorded drawing by Turner, and no doubt the memory of it was instrumental in helping his father to decide upon a profession for his son. It is said that Stothard, the painter, in early life went to the shop in Maiden Lane to get his hair cut, when the old man remarked to him in conversation : "My son, sir, is going to be a painter." One of Turner's earlier known drawings is of Margate Church, made in 1784, when he was about nine years of age.

In the following year he was sent to school at Brentford, where he boarded with his uncle, Mr. Marshall, the butcher. Mr. Thornbury says that before this his father had taught him to read, but not to write. This school was under the instruction of Mr. John White, and the pupils numbered sixty. But Turner did not stay there very long, for we read that in 1786 or 1787 he was sent to the studio of Mr. Pallice, at the Soho Academy; and as Mr. Pallice was by profession a floral painter it is clear that the youth's future profession had already been considered. Mr. Thornbury is not definite upon this point, especially in regard to date, and subsequent writers have not elucidated any further information. In a catalogue published in 1857, a drawing by Turner, of Dover Castle, is assigned to 1787. If it is really by J. M. W. Turner, and not by another artist of the same name, it must be a copy after a drawing or engraving by another hand. In 1788 he was sent to the school of Mr. Coleman at Margate, but of this period little is related save the somewhat precocious adventure of falling in love with the sister of a school-fellow.

About this time, Turner received instruction in perspective from Thomas Malton, an architectural draughtsman in Long Acre. Malton, however,

found it impossible to inculcate that science in the mind of the future Professor of Perspective at the Royal Academy, and declined to continue his teaching. One great and noteworthy incident in this association must be remarked; it was in a shop window in Long Acre—the window of a shoemaker—that Turner saw landscapes by Richard Wilson exposed for sale. In spite of his want of success as a student of perspective under Malton, Turner had a real respect for him, and according to Mr. Thornbury he used to remark in later years: "My real master, you know, was Tom Malton, of Long Acre." The boy was employed to colour prints for John Raphael Smith, the mezzotint engraver (who recommended that he should devote himself to architecture as a profession), and also added backgrounds to architects' drawings; amongst others, for Mr. Porden and Mr. Hardwick. The art of painting, apart from portraiture, at that time offered little promise of a livelihood, and both these gentlemen suggested to the boy's father that he should have his son trained for their profession. Porden, indeed, offered to take him as an apprentice without premium, a proposal which was declined. In addition to this work, Turner copied drawings by Paul Sandby (with whom he is said to have studied) which he sold in his father's shop at three shillings each.

In 1789 his father decided that he was to direct his studies towards the architectural profession, and with that end in view he went into the office of Mr. Hardwick. In the same year, upon the advice of this gentleman, he entered the schools of the Royal Academy. Mr. Ruskin was of the opinion that Turner learned nothing in these schools which was of any value to him, and that, on the contrary, "it carefully repressed his perceptions of truth, his capacities of invention, and his tendencies of choice." This we must regard as rhetorical exaggeration. From his studies in the Academy, Turner undoubtedly gained the inestimable benefit of drawing from the life, and of association with the professors and students who represented the most keen and interested artistic life of the time. In view of the meagreness of his general education, and the situation in life of his parents, any systematic instruction must have been valuable to him, and his ability in later life to draw the most varied and complicated forms points to a period of study diligently applied, even if, in Ruskin's words, there was some "waste of time during youth in painting subjects of no interest whatever."

In this same year (1789) there sprang up a friendship with Thomas

Girtin, who was employed to colour prints for the same print-seller as was Turner, an association which had the most fruitful results upon Turner's art; and a connexion beneficial to both the young artists was made about this time in their acquaintance with Dr. Munro, a collector of drawings and a patron of the Early English water-colour school, who allowed the boys access to his treasures, encouraged them to study and copy the drawings of old and modern masters, and generously bought their productions.

Having regard to the singular manner in which Turner, during a great part of his life, adopted the styles of other painters in order to demonstrate his power of harnessing his imagination to any or all systems of composing pictures, there is a particular interest in the information which Mr. Thornbury gives respecting Dr. Munro's collection. Among oil-paintings there were landscapes by Salvator Rosa, Zuccarelli, and Gainsborough, a fruit picture by Snyders, and the "Condemnation of Haman" by Rembrandt. In portfolios were drawings of London and Venice by Canaletto, and, of the British school, examples of de Loutherbourg, Sandby, Cozens, and Hearne. There were many landscape studies by Gainsborough, Dayes, and Barrett; and of more importance because of Turner's subsequent admiration of his art, several by Richard Wilson. Indian-ink and pen and wash drawings by Rembrandt, Ostade, Paul Potter, and Vandevelde, one by Titian, and some by Claude, were also available for study; and at Mr. Henderson's there were etchings by Piranesi. When the entire work of Turner is considered and estimated, and the influences which formed his style analysed, some of these names will again appear.

The most fruitful part of his student career must have been his association with Dr. Munro and the artists who formed his circle. Not only was this wealth of artistic material the source of technical acquirement and æsthetic culture, but the very places from which the pictures and drawings had been sketched were a mine of topographical knowledge. London, Windsor, Salisbury, Glasgow, Richmond, Wales, Switzerland, and Italy opened their picturesque beauty to the wondering eyes of the young students. Again, such names will reappear, endowed with new glory in the works of the mature Turner.

In this year also Turner was sketching with Girtin in the open air, on the Thames, gaining experience both in the observation and the delineation of Nature. He also sketched at Oxford. Perhaps, too, by this time he

had met Sir Joshua Reynolds and been allowed to copy more than one of his pictures.

In the following year, Turner made a visit to Bristol, where his father had a friend in a Mr. Narraway, a fellmonger (described by Thornbury as a Mr. Harraway, a fishmonger).* For this gentleman he executed several drawings, and painted his own portrait. Among these drawings are some of scenes near Clifton. There are few of his drawings extant before this date.

It is in 1790 that Turner's name first occurs in the Academy registers, and in this year also he first exhibited at the Royal Academy, his picture being "A View of the Archbishop's Palace at Lambeth." It is a good example of the architectural drawing of the time; cold in colour, but with some glow of light in the sky. The point of view is well chosen, and the figures are happily introduced; there is a feeling of atmosphere in the distance, though the solitary tree, of which a portion is seen, is characterless and summary. The scale of the buildings is well managed, but it must be confessed that there is nothing in the picture to suggest the future eminence of the artist. It is merely a careful topographical drawing, very creditable to a boy of fifteen. This picture is in the possession of Mr. W. G. Rawlinson. Turner painted views of Eltham (a drawing of King John's Palace, which Mr. Rawlinson praises) and Uxbridge also in this year. Not only has the former sound architectural draughtsmanship, but in its strong *chiaroscuro*, its rendering of sunlight breaking through ruined windows and lighting the gloom; its sense of poetry and mystery; it would be creditable to any artist of mature age. In 1791 he painted at Malmesbury and at Bristol, and there are three sketches from this visit in the Turner Collection. All this year he was attending the Academy Schools at intervals, studying casts of sculpture, and Sir Walter Armstrong tells us that from July 21, 1790, to December, 1791, he put in ninety-six attendances, or more than half the possible number.

In 1792 he showed his dawning pictorial sense in the drawing of "The Pantheon, the Morning after the Fire," and in a picturesque and interesting drawing of "The Mouth of the Avon," in Mr. Rawlinson's collection, in which colour has developed from mere tint, though still local and impersonal, into something approaching a representation of, and objects under, sunlight and in deep shadow. This year, Turner began to work in the Life Room of the Academy, and in the intervals of a fairly regular attendance

*Monkhouse.

VENICE FROM THE GIUDECCA

Painted 1840. *Exhibited* 1840.

In the Leicester Art Gallery.

made tours to Bristol and to Wales. Of one of these Welsh drawings Mr. Ruskin, as quoted in the catalogue of the Turner Collection, says that it is "very notable for a kind of irised gradation of tender colour quite unprecedented in English art at the time." And this year is also memorable from the fact that during its course Turner was engaged by Walker, an engraver, to make drawings for his *Copper-plate Magazine*.

These years of study and hard work were somewhat uneventful, but the year 1793 offers a greater field of interest. All the preceding years he had still been copying prints and washing in backgrounds and skies for architects, in order to earn his living and to gain the means of developing his original powers. By 1793 he was independent of parental assistance, and in February his name appears in the Academy register for the last time, as we learn from Sir Walter Armstrong's book. This attainment of independence was marked by the acquirement of a studio in Hand Court, Maiden Lane, near his father's place of business. He now began his long series of tours in search of material for the topographical engravers. Thornbury, quoting Mr. Lovell Reeve, says that "Turner at this time was a short, sturdy, sailor-like youth, endowed with a vigorous constitution, and inured to hard beds and simple fare; that he often walked from twenty to twenty-five miles a day, with his baggage tied up in a handkerchief swinging on the end of his stick; rapidly sketching all the good pieces of composition he met; making quick pencil notes in his pocket-book, and photographing into his mind legions of transitory effects of cloud and sky with the aid of a stupendously retentive and minute memory." In order to satisfy the wishes of Mr. Henderson, a kind and early patron, he visited Oxford and made some drawings on one of his first topographical journeys, accompanied by an artist named Cook.

Between his tours he began to teach water-colour drawing at schools, receiving for his services increasing sums from five shillings a lesson to a guinea; and attracted the attention of a publisher, Mr. Harrison, who commissioned him to execute a series of drawings for the *Oxford Almanac*. In 1793 he was again at Bristol, painting "A View of the River Avon, near St. Vincent's Rocks, Bristol" and the "Rising Squall, Hot Wells"—said by Redgrave to be his first exhibited oil-picture. There is also a reference in Thornbury's "Life" to a picture of Redcliffe Church, executed at the same time. The actual oil-picture which he first painted is said to have been a

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view of Rochester Castle, in the style of de Loutherbourg, and it reveals, as Thornbury remarks, "the experienced water-colour painter at first using a new and denser material timidly, and with a hesitating hand that was soon to grow more daring." Mr. Bell, the engraver, says, on the contrary, that Turner's first attempt in oil was made from a sketch in crayon of a sunset on the Thames, near the Red House, Battersea. And in the same manuscript is a statement that his first oil-painting "of any size or consequence" was a picture of fishing-boats in a gale of wind, off the Needles, and that it was bought by General Stewart for £10.

It is certain that Turner sketched in various parts of the country in this year (1793), though whether he was at this time accompanied by Mr. Bell, the engraver, as stated by Thornbury, is not certain. He visited Wales, amongst other districts, and was evidently impressed by the beautiful abbey of Tintern, making a drawing of the interior of it. His oil-painting of Rochester has been referred to, and in 1794 appeared in the *Copper-plate Magazine* a view of that city, the first of his drawings to be engraved. In this year also he painted "The Second Fall of the River Monach, Devil's Bridge," and a "Christ Church Gate, Canterbury," which was the subject of favourable comment in a criticism of the day, quoted by Monkhouse, which declares it to be "amongst the best in the present exhibition." The writer goes on to warn the young painter : "This young artist should beware of contemporary imitations. His present effort evinces an eye for Nature, which should scorn to look to any other source." This year is also remarkable in being the date of the first exhibition of any painting by Girtin. Walker's *Copper-plate Magazine* for November, 1794, contains an engraving of Turner's drawing of Chepstow, and in the Royal Academy exhibition of the same year there were five drawings by him.

In 1795 he travelled in the Midlands and South Wales, exhibited eight drawings in the Academy, and made drawings for the *Copper-plate Magazine*, the *Pocket Magazine*, and for Mr. Harrison. In the Turner Collection are a number of drawings and water-colours of this date, more or less finished. In the Academy Exhibition of 1796 appear eleven drawings, and Turner's travels result in many other drawings for the magazines.

This bald record of work may now be varied by a more intimate personal event. It has been mentioned that when at Margate, Turner formed an attachment for the sister of a school-fellow. Thornbury assumes that in

1796, at twenty-one years of age, Turner parted from this lady—to whom he had plighted his troth—in order to make an extended tour. Their marriage had been arranged, and he had left her, as a token of remembrance, his portrait painted by himself. But he appeared neglectful of his duties and privileges, and failed to communicate with her with reasonable regularity; indeed, no letters were received at all for a space of two years, and it is no matter for wonder that when he returned he discovered that she was within a week of being married to another. His entreaties were in vain, honour was involved, his beloved could not withdraw, and Turner was constrained to lose her and to remain a bachelor. At a later time it was discovered that the lady's step-mother had intercepted all his letters. This early disappointment soured the nature of the young artist. Perhaps it caused in him a greater devotion to his art; it cannot be said to have ennobled or purified his social character. As Mr. Monkhouse observes, the story contains inconsistencies, but it offers an explanation of strange characteristics in Turner's nature and accounts for a very marked want of confidence in his fellow-creatures.

Turner's first exhibited oil-painting, according to general tradition—though, as already mentioned, Mr. Redgrave was of another opinion—was "Moonlight at Millbank," a view of the Thames, looking east, now in the Turner Collection, which appeared at the Royal Academy in 1797. There was also exhibited in addition to four drawings of architecture, a picture of "Fishermen Coming Ashore at Sunset, previous to a Gale," and in relation to it Mr. Monkhouse quotes the following entry from the diary of Thomas Greene, of Ipswich : "June 2, 1797, visited the Royal Academy Exhibition. Particularly struck with a sea-view by Turner; fishing vessels coming in, with a heavy swell, in apprehension of tempest gathering in the distance, and casting, as it advances, a night of shade, while a parting glow is spread with fine effect upon the shore. The whole composition bold in design and masterly in execution. I am entirely unacquainted with the artist; but if he proceeds as he has begun, he cannot fail to become the first in his department."

The year 1797 was one of the most important years of Turner's life, pregnant with important influences and development. Up to this time, his work, while finer in many ways—for example, in design and composition—than that of the water-colour artists, mainly topographers, around him, was, after all, an extension of the manner of the tinted drawing. But in this year

his work took on a greater breadth of style and more individual character. His colour, while still restricted, became tinged with warmth; and feeling, rather than accuracy of transcription, animated his work. Whether it be due to the extension of his knowledge of landscape scenery, to the encouragement he received in the course of his journey, to the confidence inspired by his previous success in the exhibitions, or to the development of his inborn genius as a painter, this broadening of style and freedom of expression coincided with his first visits to Yorkshire and to Scotland. He had evidently covered a good deal of ground in what came to be the district to which he was most deeply attached—the western parts of Yorkshire—for in the exhibitions of the following year appeared "Autumnal Morning, Winesdale [? Wensleydale], Yorkshire," "The Refectory of Kirkstall Abbey," "The Dormitory and Transept of Fountain's Abbey," in addition to pictures from scenes in Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland, and Westmorland. Two oil-paintings from this series are in the Turner Collection—"Buttermere Lake" and "Morning on the Coniston Fells"—as well as many drawings and sketches.

Mr. Ruskin writes eloquently of the effect of this tour upon the mind and spirit of Turner; perhaps these more wild and lonely spaces did bring peace and solemnity to the painter's soul. Mr. Monkhouse thinks it probable that Girtin's success with his Scottish and Yorkshire drawings may have influenced Turner in the choice of his itinerary, or that he may already have received a commission from Dr. Whitaker for drawings for the "Parish of Whalley." On the Scottish part of this tour he made a picture of Norham Castle, on the Tweed, which Thornbury suggests may have been the work to which he attributed his subsequent good fortune, though it is not by any means certain that this was the identical picture, for it was the first of several pictures of the same subject. The story goes that, when making sketches in 1824 or 1825 for "Provincial Antiquities of Scotland," he took off his hat to Norham Castle, and Cadell, the publisher, who was with him, expressed surprise. Turner's reply was : "I made a drawing or painting of Norham several years since. It took; and from that day to this I have had as much to do as my hands could execute." The anecdote is given as related by Thornbury, but it is unlike Turner to be uncertain as to whether a picture so important to his successful career was a drawing or a painting.

In the exhibition of the Royal Academy of 1798 there was a picture,

"Norham Castle on the Tweed—Summer's Morn," with a quotation in the catalogue from Thomson's "Seasons." This is the first year in which quotations accompany the titles of Turner's pictures. There were five titles so embellished, and the extracts were all from Thomson's "Seasons." The subject of Norham was used in the "Liber Studiorum" and in "Marmion," and, as stated, in several drawings and paintings, and as Mr. Thornbury notes, the composition is generally the same, the castle being set as a dark mass against the rising sun, with cattle and boats in the foreground. Mr. Monkhouse gives a brief description of this arrangement which is an excellent example of the difficult art of translation from the symbols of the painter into those of the writer. This fruitful year of 1797 included also visits to Flint, Herefordshire and Lincolnshire, and Turner's illustration in "Views of the County of Lincoln" was published. This is a view of Grantham Church, from a sketch by another artist.

Continuing to increase in power and confidence as a result of his Northern tour, Turner turned his attention to oil-painting with greater success, and in 1799 produced "Kilgarran Castle, on the Twivey—Hazy Sunrise, previous to a Sultry Day," showing that he was already concerning himself with atmospheric effect, which he was afterwards to explore with such wonderful results. This picture marks the acquirement of certainty in the technical use of material by Turner; in this respect he was now at least upon an equality with contemporary artists. In this year also Turner was, at the age of 24, elected an Associate of the Royal Academy. In 1799 also he began his illustrations for the *Oxford Almanac*. Mr. Hamerton, upon the recollection of Dr. Whitaker's son, gives this year as the date of Turner's introduction to the historian of Whalley, Craven, and Richmond, which he thinks may have been through the medium of Edwards, the Halifax publisher. The Diploma picture, given to the Academy upon his election as member in 1802, was "Dolbadern Castle, North Wales," exhibited in 1799.

In this year, Turner made the acquaintance of William Beckford, the author of "Vathek," whose fame rests as much upon his efforts as a builder and connoisseur as upon his books. Among the buildings he erected was a Gothic Abbey, at Fonthill, and there Turner visited him, and sketched the ambitious edifice. In this year also appeared his beautiful drawing of Warkworth Castle, now at South Kensington; and 1799 is memorable also as the year in which appeared "The Battle of the Nile," his first naval picture.

This picture, the entry of which in the catalogue was accompanied by a quotation from Milton's "Paradise Lost," commenced his rivalry, more or less avowed, with other painters in their various styles. On this occasion he emulated the work of de Loutherbourg, an artist utterly forgotten in these days, but whose theatrical productions were much admired at the end of the eighteenth century. At such a distance of time it appears ridiculous that so sensitive a painter as Turner should have thought it worth his while to imitate the meretricious grandeur of de Loutherbourg. But his early success seems to have aroused in him a desire to demonstrate that he was superior to living, and the equal of dead, painters in their own particular spheres of excellence.

Mr. Monkhouse quotes, from Nicholls' "Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century," the following passage relating to Turner: "A painter of my acquaintance, and a good judge, declares his pencil is magic; that it is worth every landscape-painter's while to make a pilgrimage to see and study his works. Loutherbourg, he used to think of so highly, appears now mediocre." Turner's rivalry with this artist continued in 1800 and in 1802, in "The Fifth Plague of Egypt" (1800), "The Army of the Medes destroyed in the Desert by a Whirlwind," and "The Tenth Plague of Egypt" (1802). No doubt, also, the work of Poussin had its share of influence in the production of these pictures, as it had in other works that will be mentioned.

The year 1800 was a very busy year for the rising young painter. He was drawing for Angus's "Seats" and for Whitaker's "Parish of Whalley," and he exhibited, in addition to "The Fifth Plague," five views of Fonthill Abbey and a view of Caernarvon Castle. In this year he painted a classical picture, the first of the kind, in the manner of Richard Wilson, "Æneas with the Sibyl—Lake Avernus," and possibly "Rizpah watching the Bodies of her Sons." These two are in the Turner Collection, as well as two Wilsonian mountain scenes painted about the same time; all oil-paintings. His success was reflected by his removal, in 1800, to 64, Harley Street, to which address his father most probably accompanied him. His business, in view of altered fashion in regard to the wearing of hair, was no longer flourishing, and he was free to afford some assistance to his son. He strained the canvases and varnished the pictures, "which made Turner say that his father began and finished his pictures for him," according to Mr. Trimmer.

CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE—ITALY

Exhibited 1832. *In the National Gallery.*

In 1800, too, he ventured on the publication of some single plates from his drawings—a sign of prosperity. These were the "Mausoleum at Brocklesby" and "Dunster Castle."

Another evidence of his increasing fame is his inclusion in a series of portraits of Academicians by George Dance. Of this portrait Mr. Thornbury says it "represents a handsome young man, with rather large features, a full prominent nose, a fine strong-willed chin, and a rather sensual mouth, the lower lip of which is fleshy, and the upper lip beautifully curved. The eyebrow is arched, and the eyelids are long, presenting a great depth between the eye and the eyebrow. The forehead is full, but rather receding, and is covered with a stray wisp of hair, as Turner always kept it. The hair, close, thick, and somewhat stubborn-looking, is long behind and tied with a black ribbon; and he wears a white cravat, the ends of which bulge out in front of his waistcoat. The cape of his coat is of immense width, and the lapels are thrown back in a careless yet somewhat cavalier way." That this is quite a true description of Turner's personal appearance as a young man is corroborated by one or more other portraits which are reproduced in Sir Walter Armstrong's book.

About this period he seriously turned his attention to the style of Wilson, whose manner, among those of other painters he adopted in order to add a new and more ample subject matter, intended to outrival the former painter upon his own ground. His success in this attempt is discussed elsewhere; it is sufficient to note it at this point as a biographical incident. This particular rivalry continued for more than twenty years. It is interesting, too, to mark, with Mr. Ruskin, that "Turner never, after this time, 1800, drew from Nature without *composing*. His lightest pencil-sketch was the plan of a picture, his completest study on the spot a part of one."

About 1800, Turner was again in Yorkshire, sketching the Minster at York, the Abbey at Kirkstall, Bolton Abbey, and the manufacturing town of Leeds. He was also in Scotland, according to Mr. Thornbury, though Mr. Hamerton says that Turner went to Scotland for the first time in his life probably in the year 1801; that he saw Edinburgh, the Falls of Clyde, Kilchurn Castle, and the mountains at the head of Loch Awe. The picture of Kilchurn Castle, painted as a result of this visit, and exhibited in the following year, is the occasion of a considerable essay on the relationship of art to topography in Mr. Hamerton's "Life of Turner"; a very able and

interesting discussion, which has given to this picture an importance far greater than it deserves. Mr. Hamerton's point, however, is that "Kilchurn Castle" is neither an imitation of Wilson nor a copy of the actual scene in Nature. It is, he says, a Turner, and nothing but a Turner; a conclusion surely based upon Turner's abandonment of topographic truth rather than upon a cessation of his exploration into the styles of other artists. He did not disdain, at this time, to demonstrate his ability to surpass the work of Alexander Nasmyth.

This year of 1801 saw exhibited the first oil-painting, "Bolton Bridge," by Turner's friend Thomas Girtin. In this year, too, Turner exhibited one of his important marine pictures in the manner of Vandevelde, "Dutch Boat in a Gale : Fishermen putting Fish on Board." A large picture by this great Dutch painter had recently been purchased by the Duke of Bridgewater. It was entitled "The Rising of a Storm," and the praise which it occasioned roused the emulation, if not the jealousy, of Turner. He was able at a later time to rival this painter with more complete success. The only plate contributed by Turner to "The Beauties of England and Wales" was executed at this time, a view of Hampton Court.

Hannah Danby, his housekeeper until his death, entered his service in 1801, at the age of 16 years. Turner seems to have removed in this year to 75, Norton Street, Fitzroy Square, for his address is so given in the Royal Academy Catalogue, but in 1804 the Harley Street address is again given, together with West End, Upper Mall, Twickenham. The year 1802 was important both as regards production, influences, and travels, though somewhat bare of biographical information. Down to this year the most powerful factors in the formation of Turner's mind and style had been Sir Joshua Reynolds, Richard Wilson, and Thomas Girtin; but the latter painter now passed from his intimate companionship into the realm of memory, for, at the age of 28, he died, on November 9, 1802, after a long illness. His friend, who had much admired his genius, lamented his death, and it is said that he was desirous of erecting a tombstone to his memory; though whether he actually performed this pious action is doubtful. Mr. Thornbury, who in a zealous pursuit of truth sets down every scrap of gossip relating to him, favourable and unfavourable (and it may be remarked that the balance is distinctly unfavourable to his social character), quotes Peter Cunningham to the effect that Turner's parsimony finally deterred

him. But he painted Girtin's portrait in oil; and he said: "Had Tom Girtin lived, I should have starved." It was a generous expression of admiration, even if the implication was untrue. Girtin was a great artist—in his particular province of water-colour unsurpassed by any painter within the limits he himself determined. His works are full of truth and beauty, but the boundless imagination of Turner, his industry, his self-confidence, and the fiery passion with which he interpreted natural appearances, carried him far beyond the more modest sphere of his friend. One might as well compare Purcell with Bach.

This sorrow, then, was a noteworthy event of the year 1802, but there was a compensation to balance the loss. In this year, Turner made the acquaintance of Mr. Fawkes, the Squire of Farnley, near Otley, in Yorkshire, who, with his descendants, has associated his name for ever with the genius of the artist whose career he so much advanced. For a full estimate of the genius of Turner a visit to the still wonderful (though reduced in point of numbers) collection at Farnley Hall is necessary. Another patron acquired at this time was Lord Harewood, a neighbour of Mr. Fawkes. The artist always referred to this visit with gratitude and appreciation, and there can be no doubt that it had an important influence upon his career.

Apart from the society of people able to understand his distinction among artists and willing to encourage his efforts, the character of the scenery around him had its effect upon his art. The valleys of the Wharfe and the Washburn near Farnley are very beautiful, and vary much in the nature of their landscape. The Wharfe flows smoothly along a fairly wide plain, enclosed by softly rounded hills, with broad, gently sloping flanks. The Washburn, a short tributary, descends more rapidly down the hill slopes, through woods and over rocks, a miniature Alpine stream. On the banks of the Wharfe are great stretches of park-like lands, dotted with spreading trees. On the moors, which stretch away for miles at the hill-tops, there is purple heather; over their simple spaces may be seen expansive skies, and sometimes across them float mists and storms. There is loneliness without fear, wildness without violence, impressiveness and simplicity, though there is neither awe nor grandeur.

Amongst such natural features, Farnley Hall is situated. The views from it, and near it, are an epitome of English scenery. Peaceful and accessible, it was the most congenial surrounding for a painter who was not

content merely to record Nature's facts and details, but who required suggestive material for his imaginative genius. And it is worthy of note that in this year (1802) Turner very definitely shows that he has departed from his practice of topographical drawing, and commenced that amazing series of interpretations of Nature which have so intimately conveyed her inner truth through subtle and infinite variation of her outward appearance. (Among other pictures of 1802 is "Kilchurn Castle," which, as has been said, Mr. Hamerton aptly used as an illustration of this new tendency. New to him at the same period are the medium and the tools of oil-painting, but this picture shows that he had mastered them.) This treatment of the constituent features of landscape may have been the result of experiment and meditation at Farnley.

At this hospitable house there entered new interests into Turner's life. The social amenities of a country squire's existence gave him pleasures and experiences that his lonely wanderings could never afford, nor his father's humble devotion supply. Here he shot and drove and picnicked with the Fawkes family, and took his share of country life and sport, though pursuing his art with unabated industry. Mr. Thornbury refers to an exquisite drawing of a grouse "which he shot, and then immortalized."

CHAPTER II

Influences and Development (1802-1818)

THE year 1802 was further notable as Turner's first year of foreign travel. He went to Paris by Calais, through Mâcon, Lyons, and Geneva to Grenoble, and through Switzerland to Strasbourg, as we learn from Mr. Finberg and from Thornbury's analysis of his sketch-books; and we are told that Mont Blanc and Grenoble were his favourite resting-places. There came, in this year, another influence into his life, with the appearance in London of Nicholas Poussin's picture of the "Plague of Ashdod," a work reflected in several Old Testament pictures. In 1802, Turner was elected Royal Academician (and now signs himself J. M. W. Turner, R.A., whereas before he signed W. Turner, A.R.A.), and he painted a portrait of himself in evening dress, in the manner of Sir Joshua Reynolds. The pictures exhibited in this year, in addition to "Kilchurn Castle," were "Fishermen upon a Lee Shore in Squally Weather," "The Tenth Plague of Egypt," "Ships Bearing up for Anchorage," "The Falls of Clyde," "Edinburgh," "Jason," and "Ben Lomond."

In 1803 he contributed a drawing of "Wickham from the Marlow Road" to Byrne's "Britannia Depicta," and also one of "Eton from the Slough Road." This was the year of his complete, though unsuccessful, imitation of Sir Joshua Reynolds, "The Holy Family." But in the same exhibition there appeared "Calais Pier," a far more splendid achievement, though still an imitation, this time of Dutch sea-painters; and "The Vintage at Mâcon," an echo of Claude, reminiscent of Turner's foreign tour. This latter picture made a profound impression on the critics of the time, and while age has dimmed the freshness of its beauty, something has been gained from the lapse of years, for we are told by Burnet that "it is now of a deep rich tone, although when first painted it was coloured with the most vivid greens and yellows." This is a point to be remembered in connexion with these imitative pictures by Turner. No doubt in spirit and in general effect they owe their inspiration to other artists, yet purely technical qualities have very possibly

intensified their similarity. The nature of the pigments has modified the brilliance of their appearance, and age has allowed it to subside into the state of an "old master." No fewer than six pictures of the year 1803 were founded upon foreign subjects.

Of Turner at this time, we have a glimpse in a notice of him by Dayes, the water-colour painter, who died in 1804. "He may be considered a striking instance of how much may be gained by industry (if accompanied by temperance), even without the assistance of a master. The way he acquired his professional powers was by borrowing, where he could, a drawing or picture to copy from; or by making a sketch of any one in the exhibition early in the morning, and finishing it at home. By such practices, and by a patient perseverance, he has overcome all the difficulties of the art; so that the fine taste and colour which his drawings possess are scarcely to be found in any other, and are accompanied with a broad, firm *chiaro-scuro* and a light and elegant touch. This man must be loved for his works, for his person is not striking, nor his conversation brilliant."

To this year belongs the beautiful drawing of Edinburgh, which marks the complete abandonment of monochrome, and his mastery of the resources of water-colour. Another great picture first seen in 1804 is "Boats Carrying out Anchors," the beginning of a series of masterpieces. It was followed by "The Shipwreck," painted for Sir John Fleming Leicester, afterwards Lord de Tabley. This was the first oil-picture by Turner from which an engraving was made. The engraving was done by Charles Turner. The prospectus says that the work would be executed in mezzotint by C. Turner, that it would be the first engraving ever presented to the public from any of Mr. W. Turner's pictures, only fifty proofs would be taken, and the prints in colours were to be under the direction of the painter. This association of the two Turners is worthy of note in view of their later collaboration upon the "Liber Studiorum."

No pictures by Turner appeared in the 1805 exhibition of the Royal Academy. Among those painted about this time are a biblical subject, "The Destruction of Sodom," and the more distinguished "Fishing Boats." This was painted in rivalry with a picture on the same subject by Vandevelde, and both works were hung together in the Ellesmere Gallery. Turner's interest in the sea was enhanced in this year by a visit to Portsmouth to witness the return of the Trafalgar fleet—truly an inspiring incident to the

VENICE: THE DOGANA

Painted 1842. *In the Victoria and Albert Museum.*

greatest of historical marine painters. Another great attempt to excel former masters in their own particular sphere in painting was the mythological picture in the style of Poussin, "The Goddess of Discord Choosing the Apple of Contention in the Garden of the Hesperides," which appeared at the British Institution in 1806, and which is now in the Turner Collection; and about the same time was painted the "Venus and Adonis," based upon Titian's "Death of Peter the Martyr," an imitation still more successful. As the picture upon which it was founded is now destroyed, Turner's painting has an additional interest to students of art. Both these works are among the finest examples of his early manner; the first in regard to design and conception, the second in regard to colour and the power and strength of the drawing of the figures. It has been said, and often repeated, that Turner could not draw the human figure with correctness, and that he avoided the introduction into his works of all but small and insignificant human forms. The "Venus and Adonis," however, utterly refutes such an assertion. In 1806, also, Turner exhibited his "Falls of the Rhine at Schaffhausen," which the artist himself estimated very highly, according to the testimony of its owner, Lord de Tabley.

There now came into the mind of the painter a project so important in artistic history that it must receive attention for more than one reason. In the first place, it marks the seriousness of his long rivalry with Claude, and in the second place it embodies the principles of Turner's design and composition. He not only rivalled the style of Claude, as he had rivalled the styles of other artists in his paintings, but he challenged the art of Claude against his own art and style. Claude was the object of the highest admiration in the minds of certain connoisseurs of the time, and this had resulted in the publication of a series of engravings from his sketches (mere references for the identification of his pictures), entitled "Liber Veritatis." This preference for the work of a foreign painter was resented by Turner, and he expressed it by his preparation of a far finer and more complete and beautiful series of special drawings for the engravers, to be known as the "Liber Studiorum."

The first sketch for this work was made at the house of his friend, Mr. Wells. Turner's "Liber Studiorum," we are told by Mr. Wells's daughter, "entirely owes its existence to my father's persuasion. He had for a long time urged upon Turner the expediency of making a selection from his own

works for publication, telling him that it would surely be done after his death, and perhaps in a way that might not do him that justice which he could ensure for himself. After long and continual persuasion, Turner at length gave way; and one day, when he was staying with us in Kent (he always spent a part of the autumn at our cottage), he said, 'Well, Gaffer, I see there will be no peace till I comply; so give me a piece of paper. There, now ! Rule the size for me, and tell me what I am to do !' My father said 'Well, divide your subjects into classes—say, Pastoral, Marine, Elegant Pastoral, and so forth,' which was accordingly done. The first drawings were then and there made, and arranged for publication. This was in the autumn of 1806." (Thornbury.)

Turner first employed as an engraver F. C. Lewis, to whom he paid five guineas for aquatinting a plate which he himself had etched. He then sent two more drawings which he demanded should be etched and aquatinted by the engraver for the same sum. Lewis, thinking this remuneration insufficient, asked eight guineas in consideration of the extra work, which Turner refused to pay and quarrelled with him. He then applied to Charles Turner, the mezzotint engraver, and, after some chaffering, agreed to pay him eight guineas. This artist engaged himself to produce fifty plates at this price; but again a dispute occurred, and Charles Turner finished only twenty. Seventy-one plates out of an intended hundred were issued, and the other engravers employed upon them were Wm. Say, Dunkarton, Clint, Easling, Lupton, Dawe, S. W. Reynolds, and Hodgetts. There is something incongruous in this mean and parsimonious conduct of an enterprise so beautiful in itself and so valuable in its results to the art of our country, and it did not end here, but was extended to the purchasers also. Turner first charged fifteen shillings each for the prints and twenty-five shillings for proofs. As the plates got worn he altered them and sold impressions of them for proofs. Mr. Monkhouse, deriving his information from Rawlinson, says that from the first he made no distinction between proofs and prints, and that he sold the same things at different prices under different names.

This monumental work, in his own words, "Intended as an illustration of Landscape Composition, classed as follows : Historical, Mountainous, Pastoral, Marine, and Architectural," was executed in the following manner:— First, the artist made a sepia drawing of the subject for the guidance of the

engraver. Then he etched upon the copper the important lines, keeping in mind the mezzotint the engraver was to supply. This was then sent to the engraver, who mezzotinted the light and shade. Proofs of this were sent to Turner, who wrote upon them his directions for further work, sometimes working upon the plate himself, if he was not satisfied with the engraver's efforts; and in a few cases he etched and engraved the entire plate himself. This occupied a great deal of his time from the year 1807, when the first plates were published, until 1816, when the issue ceased. The artistic significance of the series is discussed in another chapter.

The year 1807, in addition to the initiation of this design, saw the exhibition of still another rivalry in "The Blacksmith's Shop," inspired by Wilkie's "Village Politicians." It is said that Turner intended the strong colour of this picture to detract attention from Wilkie's "Blind Fiddler," which was in the same exhibition. Hanging on the wall at the same time was Turner's well-known work "The Sun Rising Through Vapour," left to the National Gallery on the condition that it should be hung between two pictures by Claude. Of this time, also, are "Saltash," "The Highland Bridge," and "Old Margate Pier." In 1808 he went to live at the Upper Mall, Hammersmith, without, however, giving up the house at 64, Harley Street; in this year also he made a visit to Tabley Park, in Cheshire, and his exhibited pictures included "The Death of Nelson" and "Jason" (British Institution).

Turner was appointed, at this time, Professor of Perspective at the Royal Academy. We have seen that as a boy he had difficulty in imbibing a knowledge of this subject, especially the mathematical side of it, and none of his pictures is remarkable for its correctness in that respect. Yet, in spite of his decided obscurity in literary composition and his difficulty in verbal expression, he took his responsibility very seriously, and by the use of elaborate and carefully prepared illustrations endeavoured to instil into his pupils the severe rules of an arbitrary science which in his own practice he consistently ignored. Nor could we wish that he had done otherwise. He had the empirical knowledge necessary to produce the required illusion and to make his landscape credible; and a pedantic subservience to rules would have advanced his pictures little further, and might possibly have impeded his chief gift of imagination.

In 1809 he was painting at Petworth, the seat of Lord Egremont. The exhibition pictures were "Spithead : Boat's Crew Recovering an Anchor"

(another in the manner of Vandevelde), two views of Tabley, and the "Garetteer's Petition," an interior scene recalling Hogarth and the Dutch interior painters. To the same time is assigned a painting of St. Mawes, Falmouth Harbour. There are some interesting letters, dated at the close of 1809, from Turner to Wyatt, of Oxford, regarding a proposed publication of engravings from his works. They serve to show his excellent business qualities and, when his interests were involved, that he could be precise and detailed in expression, qualities in which his social correspondence is markedly deficient.

About this period there came into being, from Turner's practice of showing in his house the pictures which did not sell, what was known as "The Turner Gallery," first given that name at the Harley Street address. Turner's father acted as the custodian of the collection, admitting and showing the visitors round it.

The reason for Turner's going to live at Hammersmith seems to have been a desire to be near de Loutherbourg, whose work, as we have seen, he much admired, and strove to rival at one period of his career. The result of this contiguity was unfortunate, for Mrs. de Loutherbourg became suspicious of Turner's visits to her husband, thinking he was trying to probe his technical secrets, and she took an effective means to end them by refusing him admittance to the house. Thornbury gives us a friend's account of the Hammersmith home at this time. "At the beginning of the century, Turner had a place at Hammersmith Mall. The garden, which ran down to the river, terminated in a summer-house, and here, out in the open air, were painted some of his best pictures. It was here that my father, who then resided at Kew, became first acquainted with him, and expressing his surprise that Turner could paint under such circumstances, the latter remarked that lights and room were absurdities, and that a picture could be painted anywhere. His eyes were remarkably strong. He would throw down his water-colour drawings on the floor of the summer-house, requesting my father not to touch them, as he could see them there and they would be drying at the same time."

Another passage relating to this time seems worth reproducing as an indication of Turner's character. "It was here Mr. Trimmer remembers walking, when a child, with his father and Turner at night under the blaze of the great comet. Turner was fond of children, and children reciprocated

the affection." The Mr. Trimmer who walked out with Turner was the Rev. Henry Scott Trimmer, Vicar of Heston, a long and intimate friend from whose recollections of the artist Thornbury acquired much of his biographical material.

In the year 1810, Turner exhibited two views of Lord Lonsdale's home, Lowther Castle, and "Dewy Morning." He also painted, in the same year, the well-known picture of "Abingdon, Berkshire," now in the Turner Collection. "The Wreck of the *Minotaur*" is a picture of this time, still in recollection of the Dutch sea-painters. Thornbury, referring to a visit to Devon and Dorset in this year, points out the minuteness of detailed observation in the resulting sketch-book. Historical notes, possibilities of navigation, the height of lighthouses, antiquities, market-days, legends, and a hundred other points of interest are recorded alongside the sketches.

In 1811, Turner was on the Hanging Committee of the Royal Academy, and in connexion with his functions on this occasion a story is told which may help to remove the unfavourable impression which his quarrels with engravers has created. A picture had been sent to the exhibition by Bird, an unknown painter, which the committee admired but did not place. Turner demurred to this neglect, and demanded that space must be found for so fine a picture. Upon the refusal of the Academicians to reconsider the matter, he removed one of his own pictures from the wall, and hung Bird's work in its place; and this trait of generous encouragement of younger painters was constant in Turner. He could be fiercely competitive in the face of a masterpiece, and chivalrously generous to aspiring talent.

The year 1811 saw the exhibition of a notable picture, "Apollo Killing the Python," the entry in the catalogue being accompanied by a quotation from Callimachus (The Turner Catalogue says the verses are Turner's own), a picture in which, as Mr. Monkhouse says, there exists a perfect union between literary subject and landscape. Titian, no doubt, was the painter whom this work commemorates. It was not the only classical picture of the year, for at the same time was shown "Mercury and Herse," with lines from Ovid's "Metamorphoses," a book from which he gathered subjects for a number of his paintings. This picture suggests Claude as the object of rivalry. Among the nine pictures in the exhibition there was included the beautiful water-colour "Chryses." Interesting it is, indeed, to note the variety of subject and style employed by the artist at this time. In the catalogue of the year

the Harley Street address does not appear, and in the following year it is given as Queen Anne Street West.

There is a book to which Mr. Monkhouse refers—"Past Celebrities" by Cyrus Redding—which gives a pleasant view of Turner at this period of his career. Among other things, he says that the artist "was once at a party where there were several beautiful women, one of them struck him much with her charms and captivating appearance; and he said to a friend, in a moment of unguarded admiration, 'If she would marry me, I would give her a hundred thousand.'" This is quoted as showing that Turner was no misogynist, so devoted to his art as to eschew the delights of society, but that he was a man of ordinary human passions and ambitions. Mr. Redding speaks with appreciation of Turner's companionable nature, and his hospitality, as well as his terse but effective conversation. He says the painter had a "plain figure," "somewhat bandy legs," and "dingy complexion." He describes him as being of frugal habits. Referring to an excursion they took together, he says: "Turner was content with bread and cheese and beer, tolerably good for dinner and supper in one. . . . In the little sanded room we conversed by the light of our attenuated candle, and some aid from the moon, till nearly midnight, when Turner laid his head upon the table and was soon sound asleep. . . . We were both fresh enough to go out when the sun was up, to explore the scenery in the neighbourhood." They went on another excursion to an island off the coast of Devonshire, in a Dutch boat in a stormy sea. Two of the party were ill, but Turner watched the waves and the coast with steady interest, seeming to be entirely absorbed by the scene. On landing, Turner "mounted to the highest point of the island rock, and seemed writing rather than drawing, the wind was almost too violent for either purpose; what he particularly noted he did not say."

That Turner was not insensible to deference is shown by an extract from some notes by Sir Charles Eastlake with reference to this same journey in Devonshire. He says: "Turner made his sketches in pencil and by stealth. His companions, observing his peculiarity, were careful not to intrude upon him. After he returned to Plymouth, in the neighbourhood of which he remained some weeks, Mr. Johns fitted up a small portable painting-box, containing some prepared paper for oil-sketches, as well as other necessary materials. When Turner halted at a scene and seemed inclined to sketch it, Johns produced the inviting box, and the great artist,

THE "FIGHTING *TÉMÉRAIRE*"
TUGGED TO HER LAST BERTH TO BE
BROKEN UP, 1838

Exhibited 1839. *In the National Gallery.*

finding everything ready to his hand, immediately began to work. As he sometimes wanted assistance in the use of the box, the presence of Johns was indispensable, and after a few days he made his oil-sketches freely in our presence. Johns accompanied him always; I was only with them occasionally. Turner seemed pleased when the rapidity with which these sketches were done was talked of; for, departing from his habitual reserve in the instance of his pencil-sketches, he made no difficulty of showing them. On one occasion, when, on his return after a sketching ramble to a country residence belonging to my father, near Plympton, the day's work was shown, he himself remarked that one of the sketches (and perhaps the best) was done in less than half an hour. When he left Plymouth he carried off all the results. We had reckoned that Johns, who had provided all the materials, and had waited upon him devotedly, would at least have had a present of one or two of the sketches. This was not the case; but long afterwards the great painter sent Johns, in a letter, a small oil-sketch, not painted from Nature, as a return for his kindness and assistance. On my inquiring afterwards what had become of these sketches, Turner replied that they were worthless, in consequence, as he supposed, of some defect in the preparation of the paper; all the grey tints, he observed, had nearly disappeared. Although I did not implicitly rely on that statement, I do not remember to have seen any of them afterwards." (Thornbury, p. 153.) The Mr. Johns mentioned was a painter of some ability named Ambrose Johns, of Plymouth.

These are glances at Turner as he was working to obtain material for his pictures at this time of his life. It is significant of much in his character that Sir Charles Eastlake should have been unable implicitly to rely upon the artist's word, however trivial the occasion. The sketches are now in the Turner Collection. Concealment and secrecy were deeply ingrained in his nature. On this journey, also, Turner went to Barnstaple, or Exeter, and visited his relations—a Mr. Price Turner, and his son and daughter. When this gentleman afterwards came to London he returned Turner's call, only gaining an interview on the third occasion, and received a cool reception, never being so much as asked to sit down.

Since 1800, Turner's drawings for the engravers, excepting those for "Liber Studiorum," had been comparatively few, but the year 1812 produced an important drawing of "Fountains Abbey" for Whitaker's "History and

Antiquities of Craven." Another remarkable event occurs in the appearance, in connexion with "Snowstorm : Hannibal and his Army crossing the Alps," of the first quotation from the poem, "The Fallacies of Hope. The painting is said by Mr. Monkhouse to be based upon a picture of the same subject by J. Cozens, and partly upon a storm observed at Farnley. The story goes, as told by Sir Walter Armstrong, who had it from Mrs. Ayscough Fawkes, "that one day the painter was standing before the house (at Farnley) looking at the hill in front, which was under a heavy thunder-cloud. He called to his host and, pointing to the hill, said : 'You will see that again; it will be called 'Hannibal crossing the Alps.' " To those who are interested in the wretched lines of "The Fallacies of Hope," miserable imitations of eighteenth-century poetry, Mr. Thornbury's extracts on page 205 of his "Life of Turner" may afford some satisfaction. The truth is that the artist thinks in colour and line, and not in words; the symbols of poet and painter are so different that, with the exception of Blake and Rossetti, no individual has been successful in both arts. Even the most fervent admirers of their genius will pause to consider whether in each case the magic of words was not stronger than the magic of painting. Turner might have explained his idea of the analogy of England and Carthage, suggested by Mr. Thornbury, far more clearly in a single line of prose than in the eleven lines of blank verse which are printed in the catalogue. In the year of "Hannibal" there appeared in the Academy a "View of the Castle of St. Michael, near Bonneville, Savoy," and two views of Oxford.

The removal from Harley Street to Queen Anne Street was an important event in Turner's life. In addition to a studio, he here had the advantage of rooms in which to exhibit his pictures. The house was kept in a state of lamentable neglect. Leslie told Mr. Hamerton that he had known the house for forty years, that during the whole of that time it had never received one touch of paint or repair, and that the papers had never been renewed. Turner resented intrusion into this house, offered little hospitality, and lived in the simplest manner. It was not, however, entirely due to meanness or love of solitude that he kept his painting-room closed to the world. He was a great experimenter, and the secrets of his technique he was justified in guarding, not only from artists but from the prying eyes of dealers and collectors as well. We get little information as to his home life at any time, but Mr. Thornbury gives us an account communicated to him by

Mr. Rose, of Jersey, of a visit to Harley Street. Two ladies once paid Turner a visit. It was the depth of winter and they were shown into a room without a fire. In various parts of the room were lying about several tail-less cats. When the artist appeared, he asked if the ladies felt cold. One of them replied in the negative, though her companion had hoped they might have been invited to see his studio. "After a little conversation he offered them wine and biscuits, which they partook of for the novelty, such an event being almost unprecedented in his house. One of the ladies bestowing some notice on the cats, he was induced to remark that he had several, and that they came from the Isle of Man."

In 1813, two pictures appeared in the exhibition, "A Frosty Morning" and "The Deluge," the first with a quotation from Thomson and the second from Milton. Another work of the year was "The Thames at Kingston Bank." "A Frosty Morning" was compared, to its advantage, with the work of Constable by a contemporary critic, evidently upon the ground of truth to Nature. It is a Yorkshire scene, with a two-horse cart in it, for which horses the old bay pony which carried Turner about the country was the model. Turner was much attached to this animal, and grieved for its death. "The Deluge" was, no doubt, inspired by Poussin's picture in the Louvre, of which Turner is known to have made an analysis. It was engraved by J. Quilley. There is a sketch-book of this year, in which are several studies for pictures in rivalry of Claude and some notes on the chemistry of pigments and varnishes, and it is significant, in view of the prevailing colour of his later pictures, that nine pages are devoted to the recipes for various shades of yellows.

In 1814 the artist went to live at Twickenham, at a house first called Solus Lodge, and afterwards Sandycombe Lodge. This house he designed himself. It lies on the road from Twickenham to Isleworth, and Mr. Monkhouse describes it as a small semi-Italian villa covered with plaster and decorated with iron balustrades and steps. The son of Turner's friend, the Rev. Mr. Trimmer, gave to Mr. Thornbury some interesting details of the artist's life at Twickenham. He says that Richmond scenery greatly influenced his style, and that the Scotch firs (or stone pine) around are in most of his large classical subjects, and Richmond landscape is decidedly the base of the "Rise of Carthage." Turner had a boat at Richmond, and from it he painted on a large canvas direct from Nature; an interesting piece

of information in view of his practice of composing all his pictures, regardless of topographical fact. When the grandiloquent titles of his classical pictures, and the quotations from classical and modern authors which accompany them are remembered, and especially when Mr. Ruskin's eulogy of their legendary and mythological significance is connected with them, it is interesting to read the following passage in Mr. Trimmer's notes: "Turner, when beginning his great classical subjects from the 'Æneid,' regretted his ignorance of Latin; and my father undertook to teach him for instruction in painting in return. My father, who was accustomed to teaching, has told me Turner sadly floundered in the verbs, and never made any progress—in fact, he could not spare the time."

The notes have relevance here, for in the year 1814 Turner exhibited his picture of "Dido and Æneas"—one of the finest of his works in which the flat-topped stone pines are introduced—and in the same year, at the British Institution, appeared "Apuleia in search of Apuleius." He quotes Ovid's "Metamorphoses," in which the incident does not occur. Both these pictures are in Claude's manner, and the second was painted as a companion to the picture by Claude in the possession of the Earl of Egremont. In it occurs a bridge of seven arches—again suggestive of Richmond. "The Limekiln" or "Coalbrookdale" also belongs to this year, and in the same year was begun the series of the "Southern Coast." Mr. W. B. Cooke, an excellent engraver, commissioned Turner to produce the drawings for this work, the number of plates, by 1826, when publication ceased, amounting to forty. They are amongst the most beautiful of his water-colours, and they spread his fame far and wide. At first he received for each a price of £7 10s., though, as seemed to be his usual bad fortune in transactions with engravers, he afterwards disputed and haggled about the matter. After the first four numbers of the work had appeared, an agreement was made by which he was to receive £10 for each drawing, and a third arrangement was that he should have £13 2s. 6d. for a future series of the "Northern Coast." Despite these clear agreements, he demanded a retrospective payment on the earliest drawings of two guineas each. Mr. Cooke's side of the controversy was conducted with dignity and consideration, though with a certain amount of warmth. Turner, on the other hand, cannot be acquitted of avarice, even if he was not actually dishonest. He demanded the return of a drawing which he had given as a present to Cooke's wife, and charged two guineas for the

loan of it. It seems a petty matter at this day, when the sale-rooms have disposed of some of these drawings at hundreds of pounds each; but it throws a light on Turner's extraordinary character. It must be noted that the prices mentioned were not for the possession of the drawings, but only for the right to engrave and publish them.

In 1815, Turner was attracted by the charms of Mr. Trimmer's sister-in-law, and in a letter to his friend makes a veiled proposal of marriage, which, mysterious as it is in expression, Mr. Trimmer's son regarded as genuine, and says that Turner's attachment was undoubted. The passage relating to the offer is as follows: "After next Tuesday—if you have a moment's time to spare, a line will reach me at Farnley Hall, near Otley, Yorkshire, and for some time, as Mr. Fawkes talks of keeping me in the north by a trip to the Lakes, etc., until November, therefore, I suspect I am not to see Sandycombe. Sandycombe sounds just now in my ears as an act of folly, when I reflect how little I have been able to be there this year, and less chance (perhaps) for the next in looking forward to a Continental excursion, and poor Daddy seems as much plagued with weeds as I am with disappointment, that if Miss —— would but waive bashfulness, or—in other words—make an offer instead of expecting one—the same might change occupiers—but not to teaze you further, allow me with most sincere respects to Mrs. Trimmer and family, to consider myself, Your most truly obliged, J. M. W. Turner." Not a very poetical production for the author of "The Fallacies of Hope," though no doubt sincere.

This was the year of "Bligh Sand, near Sheerness." (It had been painted in 1809, though only exhibited at the Academy in 1815, and had been desired by Sir George Beaumont, a famous patron of the arts—himself a painter. This gentleman, however, had formerly ridiculed Turner, who gave himself the pleasure of refusing to sell the picture to him.) The work is said by Mr. Thornbury, upon the authority of an artist, to have altered in its appearance, particularly with regard to the sky, fugitive colours having been used for that part of the painting. This year, moreover, was memorable for the appearance of several other important pictures. "Crossing the Brook" is the most renowned of them. The painter himself was very much attached to it, and could hardly bear to part with it to Brandard, the engraver, who required two years to execute his plate from it. The locality from which the details of the scene are drawn is near Plymouth, looking towards the

estuary of the Tamar, some twenty miles from the sea. In the painting of the distance in this picture, Turner transcended anything he had before achieved. He still remembers Claude, but he is evidently passing into his own mature style. It is a great composition, and is less wonderful than his later pictures only in regard to colour and transparency. It was a commission for which the artist should have been paid £500; but the prospective purchaser was dissatisfied, and Turner afterwards declined to sell it for £1600.

Scarcely less celebrated is "Dido building Carthage." The fervour of his competition with Claude for the preference of posterity caused him to leave this picture, together with "The Sun Rising Through Vapour," to the nation, with instructions that they were to be hung between the two pictures by Claude, "The Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba" and "The Mill (Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca)." Its archæology may be open to question, and many of its details to criticism, but the poetry of its conception and the imaginative power with which the whole is woven into unity, fix it as a landmark in his career. Turner resented the lack of public taste which left so ambitious a work unsold at the close of the exhibition, and though tempted by the sculptor, Chantrey, with a price four times greater than he had put upon it in the first instance, he refused to sell it even to so intimate a friend. Later, Sir Robert Peel and others, wishing to present this work and another of his Carthaginian pictures to the nation, offered £5000 for the pair, but Turner, though gratified, had already decided to present them himself, and against the instances of his keenness in financial matters this example of generosity should be placed. It was possible for him to have satisfied his desire to have the pictures in national possession, and also to have realized what was at that time a very handsome sum for their sale.

This wonder year also saw the appearance of the drawing "The Battle of Fort Rock, Val d'Aouste," said by Sir Walter Armstrong "to contain his last word, with one notable exception, as an exponent of the technique of water-colour." This drawing is now in the Turner Collection. In the year 1816 the "Liber Studiorum" was ended. The only picture exhibited was the "Temple of Jupiter Panhellenius at Ægina," a work constructed from a sketch by Mr. H. Gally Knight. It is in effect a restoration of the temple, though Turner had never seen the ruins. During this year he was working for publishers on "The Southern Coast," "Views in Sussex," and "Rivers

RAIN, STEAM AND SPEED: THE GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY

Exhibited 1844. *In the National Gallery.*

of Devon." Nearly the whole of the summer was spent at Farnley, during which Turner made sketching tours in the Craven district.

In 1817 appeared his "Decline of the Carthaginian Empire," a picture which Mr. Ruskin condemned, and which is certainly inferior to "Dido." He made a tour in Belgium and Holland and on the Rhone, having been prevented by the Napoleonic wars from visiting the Continent since 1804. The cessation of war, and the national pride in victory, naturally turned the attention of painters to the events of the struggle, and Turner was not less eager than his contemporaries to express his sense of triumph. In the exhibition of 1818 there appeared a picture by him of "The Field of Waterloo," now in the Turner Collection. It is a striking example of the futility of mere illustration on the part of an artist whose genius was pictorial. The subject has been more appropriately treated by far inferior painters. But the year was fruitful, though it was not marked by any notable pictures.

Turner was invited to collaborate with Sir Walter Scott in the production of "Provincial Antiquities of Scotland." It is a proof of the point at which his reputation stood at this time that he should have been asked to undertake this work, which might well have been given to Thomson of Duddingstone —then at the height of a well-deserved national fame, who drew some of the illustrations. Indeed, so far as the purpose of the "Provincial Antiquities" is concerned, Thomson would have adhered more closely to the wishes of the promoters, though he was by no means a mere pedestrian artist. It is said that Scott would have preferred Thomson, but agreed to Turner on the ground that he was "the fashion."

CHAPTER III

The Great Colourist (1819-1835)

IN 1819 Turner made his first visit to Italy, and, as might be expected from the various influences to which he had responded, his style reflected the scenery and the treasures of art with which he came in contact. In the course of his journey he saw Rome, Florence, Naples, Pompeii, Milan, Verona, Venice, and many other places rich in beauty and artistic wealth. Since 1815 he had developed the warmth and brightness of his colour, and he had begun to move in the direction of that heightened key, which became his individual contribution to oil-painting. His experience of Italy confirmed and hastened this tendency. The sketch-books of the tour show the eagerness with which he approached the novelty of Italian landscape, with its noble architecture and picturesque ruins. These he drew untiringly—in a few instances noting effects of colour as they fleeted by. The visit marks the end of his first period of student and emulative efforts. He had produced wonderful pictures, had developed the art of water-colour to an extent undreamed of until that time, and had in many cases surpassed the masters he imitated in their own distinguishing style; had he ceased at this moment to produce any more pictures he would undoubtedly have ranked as one of the masters of the English School of Painting.

Before we follow him to his period of magnificence we must note the pictures of the exhibition of 1819, which form the last production of his first period. They are two very imposing works, "Entrance of the Meuse—Orange Merchantman on the Bar going to Pieces" and "England—Richmond Hill on the Prince's Birthday," both in the National Collection. After the pretentious and unsuccessful "Waterloo" he proves that the desire to raise his personal monument to national military glory has only obscured and not overwhelmed his artistic genius; he has returned to more purely pictorial subjects and treatment, though with less complete success than in some former years. The first picture established his superiority to his great exemplar, Vandevelde, in the realm of sea-painting; and fitly closes his

competitive career. The splendid rhythm of the waves, the luminous beauty of the sky with its height upon height of clouds, the composition so happy as to appear almost unconscious in its arrangement, and yet so sure and inevitable, and the brilliant notes of colour so admirably placed, make up a veritable triumph of construction in its adopted style. The second picture, "Richmond Hill," has found many critics both in regard to drawing and to colour, but its distance in subtle gradation of atmospheric perspective is attractive, and, as already observed, it is a return to the pictorial motive which "Waterloo" had interrupted. It has been termed "unpleasantly heavy," and the figures described as "hideously drawn"; but the scene is animated, the landscape full of light and colour, and the composition noble and dignified.

Those two pictures, then, mark the point of attainment from which Turner stepped to his Italian inspiration.

The years 1820 and 1821 produced some of Turner's most beautiful illustrations, part of Dr. Whitaker's "Richmondshire," though they were not published until 1823, and in 1820 also he executed some drawings after camera-obscura sketches for Hakewell's "Picturesque Tour in Italy." As might be expected, in the case of an artist so subjective as Turner, they are not remarkable. Most of Turner's water-colour drawings for the next twenty years were made for the engravers and they varied greatly in quality. Eighteen-hundred and twenty was the year of "Rome from the Vatican: Raphael and the Fornarina in the corridor of the Loggia," one of the largest pictures ever painted by Turner. About the same time appeared "Rome: the Arch of Titus." These works, though not distinctive in themselves, marked the adoption of a newer and lighter colour-scheme. Whether due to pressure of work for the engravers, or whether the painter was experimenting in his new style, the oil-paintings of this and the following year or two are not among his best, though his drawings for the engravers are of exquisite beauty.

In connexion with this work for the engravers an amusing story is told by Thornbury. Turner's relations with publishers were never very happy, and when he went north to work upon Whitaker's "Richmondshire" he took with him a letter of introduction from a London publisher which closed by saying, "Above all things remember that Turner is a great Jew." His personal appearance was not incompatible with such a statement, and his host (Hamerton says his hostess) departed for church on the next morning, it being

Sunday, leaving Turner to employ himself as best pleased him. Turner appeared to be surprised at this treatment, but said nothing until dinner-time, when some apology was tendered for the presence of ham upon the table. Upon Turner's asking the meaning of this, he was told, "Why, they wrote to me that you were a Jew."

In 1821 Turner exhibited no picture in the Royal Academy, and in 1822, only one, "What you will!" a work of no importance; but in 1823 there burst upon the world a vision of beauty, never before equalled in its originality and its romantic charm in the experience of those living at the time. It was the picture "The Bay of Baiæ, with Apollo and the Sybil." The peculiar significance of this picture is discussed in another chapter, but it must be observed here that it is the earliest of several pictures of its class, and perhaps the best of them. These works were the embodiment of Turner's Italian experiences, and the thoughts and emotions they had induced in his mind and soul. In the previous year, 1822, as we have seen, the only work by Turner in the Academy catalogue was "What you will!" and as Mr. Thornbury describes it in a note as the first picture in the artist's last manner, it cannot be the work he refers to as "a sea-piece—a grey picture, beautiful and true, but with no positive colour in any part of it," which was hanging next to Constable's "Opening of Waterloo Bridge" in that year. Constable and Turner were rather rivals than friends, though their artistic aims were quite different. There is a story which illustrates the difference. Constable had painted a picture which did not please him, and, as he was trying to find out what was its defect, Turner entered the room. He was asked to look at the picture, which he did for a few minutes. Then he took up a brush and painted in a ripple of water in the foreground. He had completed the picture. If any comparison between the art of the two men were instituted the key would be found in this story. Turner's imagination was more powerful than Constable's observation. It was the studio and the memory against the open air and the eye. The constructor of pictures opposed to the selector from Nature.

The long rivalry with Wilson had not ceased so late as this year. It had endured for more than twenty years, and yet Turner writes to Messrs. Hurst and Robinson on June 28, 1822, suggesting the engraving of four large plates, and in the course of his letter says, "Whether we can in the present day contend with such powerful antagonists as Wilson and Woollett would be at least tried by size, security against risk, and some remuneration for the

time of painting . . . to succeed would perhaps form another epoch in the English School; and if we fall, we fall by contending with giant strength." All that is evident from this letter is that Turner still believed in the painting of Wilson, and was still determined to rival him.

The exhibition of "The Bay of Baiæ" was the outstanding event of the year 1823, an event propitious enough, for it was, despite its resemblance to Claude, Turner's first work in his own individual style of classical painting. There were, however, other important happenings. About this time Turner made the acquaintance of David Roberts at a meeting of the Artists' Benevolent Fund, and the impression made upon Roberts by the great painter is one of the most valuable indications, not only as to Turner's character, but as to the estimation of his art by his contemporaries. Roberts says that the mighty painter that all spoke of, and whose works were the all-in-all to every young artist, was Turner. His works had been engraved by the greatest engravers of the day, and were known to all who took any interest in art whatever. As the company were seated around the table (the words are Roberts's own), a little square-built man came in, to whom all paid respect. The business having begun, he joined in the conversation, and made some weak attempts at wit, at least no one seemed to laugh at his jokes but himself. So Roberts asked who this facetious little man was, and his astonishment on being told that it was "The Great Turner" turned his head.

Turner originated this "Artists' Benevolent Fund," and it was very near his heart, as is proved later by his will. His invincible avarice, however, though encouraging him to amass money, prevented him from applying it to the purpose for which it was intended. He looked forward to large benefits which in the future it might confer upon artists and their dependants, but in the meanwhile the widows and orphans of poor artists were starving. Turner was treasurer of the fund, and paid no heed to the complaints of the younger members of the directorate. They wished to relieve applicants as their need required; he wished to accumulate a capital sum and distribute only the interest. The malcontents, led by the Scottish miniature painter, Andrew Robertson, eventually gained the day, and Turner seceded from the society for ever. In view of the disposition of his property at his death it cannot be doubted that his intentions were liberal, and possibly they were even wise; but his inflexibility may also have arisen from the consciousness of his own generous project, and his foresight was perhaps too long for the

tolerance of his more sympathetic brethren. He had saved and denied himself for this very principle, and in doing so had forgotten how to spend.

Another important circumstance of this period was the publication of Whitaker's "Richmondshire," containing engravings of some of his most beautiful drawings, which numbered twenty. The subjects, Mr. Hamerton says, were chosen not by Turner, but by a committee of gentlemen who journeyed over the district in order to select the scenes for illustration. They were Dr. Wm. Turner, Tate, the Master of the Richmond Grammar School, and Mr. Wm. Whitaker. For these drawings Mr. Ruskin had a great admiration. Mr. Monkhouse observes that "the engravings probably owed much to Turner's supervision, and many of them were perfect translations of the originals, showing an advance in the art of engraving as great as that which Turner had made in water-colour drawing."

It may be here noted that this advance in engraving was one of Turner's notable contributions to the resources of art. Those who derive their impressions of the innumerable paintings of the museums and collections of the world from the photographic transcriptions of recent times (and it is impossible to gain a conspectus otherwise), can never feel the thrill which was experienced, even so late as forty years ago, from a fine engraving of a fine picture. There was in it the beauty of a translation; the ideas expressed in one language repeated in the idioms of another; if something was lost, and inevitably so, something was also gained. Engravers had perfected their technique to such a point that they were able to indicate in complete subtlety the most delicate intentions of the painter. And in addition they gave to numbers of people who might have missed the points in the original picture, hints as to the quality of the work, which they, as artists trained to a high degree of perception, were particularly qualified to point out. The beauties and delicacy of colour were, in these engravings, rendered with peculiar success in the black and white tone substitute. Gradation of tone became the object at which the engravers aimed, and at the same time no element of the composition was accented or emphasized so as to destroy the most complicated design. This great achievement of the British engravers, superior in their craft to the engravers of the world, is directly due to the teaching of Turner. Not only did he present to them the most difficult of tasks—the rendering in black and white of the most tender and subtle shades of tone—which in itself must have greatly improved their powers in

ULYSSES DERIDING POLYPHEMUS

Painted 1828. *Exhibited* 1829.

In the National Gallery.

the attempt to reproduce them, but he personally superintended their labours, and while demanding an impossible perfection, showed the direction in which improvement must manifest itself. It is a matter for regret that the advance of mechanical means of reproducing pictures has caused this powerful and beautiful art, in at least some of its forms (for they were various), to decay.

The year 1824 was, so far as the exhibition of any pictures is concerned, a blank year. But it was not without importance in Turner's artistic career, and in a circumstance which has greatly benefited our own generation. This was the year of the publication of "Rivers of England," published by W. B. Cooke. "Norham" and "Totnes," two of the illustrations to this volume, are drawings for this series of engravings, among the most beautiful of a very beautiful group. There are those who cannot find beauty in the later work of Turner, and some who see in it the evidences of a disordered imagination; but there are no students of painting, however narrow and conservative, who do not enjoy as masterpieces of composition and colour the drawings for the "Rivers of England."

The other circumstance of the year 1824 is the foundation of the National Gallery, by the purchase of the Angerstein Collection. There can be no doubt that had this event not taken place during Turner's life-time his noble bequest to the nation would not have been made. The spirit which animated him in that course of action was possibly real generosity in the first place, but in view of his life-long rivalry with his predecessors in various schools and methods of painting it is at least presumable that he desired posterity to be aware of his right to be compared with the best of them. Therefore he took care that he should be overpoweringly represented.

The following year, 1825, saw only one exhibited picture, "The Harbour of Dieppe"; but Turner was still occupied with the publications for which he had undertaken to make drawings. There appeared at this time the edition of Byron's works, which included several illustrations by him; he afterwards illustrated other of Byron's poems. Some of these drawings were made from sketches by other artists, and as Mr. Monkhouse observes, are less interesting from a biographical point of view than his own work. Ruskin sees in the work of this year, and about it, "a grievous metamorphosis," "his work becomes partly satirical, partly reckless, partly—and in its greatest and nobler features—tragic." We shall see some justification for this statement in the work of the following few years.

In 1826, Turner sold his cottage at Twickenham to a Mr. Ford. This was also the year of the "Cologne—The arrival of a Packet-boat—Evening," a "Forum Romanum" for the Soane Museum, and a Mortlake picture. Thornbury relates an instance of generous treatment of a colleague in connexion with the "Cologne" picture. When it was exhibited it was hung between two portraits by Sir Thomas Lawrence. The sky of Turner's picture was very bright, and had an injurious effect upon the colour of the portraits, which displeased Lawrence and caused him to complain of the action of the Hanging Committee. On Varnishing Day, some friends and admirers of Turner's painting went up to the picture, which they expected to find as brilliant as when it had been seen in the studio. But they were astonished to find that the golden sky had changed. When they inquired of Turner the reason of it, he said to them, "Oh, poor Lawrence was so unhappy! It's only lamp-black. It'll all wash off after the exhibition." He had spoiled his picture for the time, and let it remain so throughout the exhibition, in order to gratify his friend. This anecdote is the more forcible from the fact that in the opinion of some critics of Turner's work, the picture was one of his finest efforts. Mr. Hamerton describes the "desecrated" sky as "one of the most splendid pieces of harmonious colouring in the whole range of landscape art."

In the same year appeared the prospectus of "The Ports of England," one of Turner's grandiloquent literary effusions, which announced that there were to be several volumes of the work, issued in parts. Only twelve plates were ever published, and of the drawings for these, two, "Portsmouth" and "Dover," are reproduced in the present work. The year, however, saw the completion of another publication, already mentioned, "The Southern Coast," begun in 1814. There were forty drawings, illustrating the scenery of the coast from Ramsgate to Land's End.

It has been noted that at this time Turner gave up his cottage of Sandycombe. To this has been attributed the capricious nature of his work in the years immediately following. It involved his severance from the family of the Trimmers, who had exercised a very wholesome influence upon his character and his art. He was thrown back upon himself, and became morose and gloomy, and more avaricious and impracticable in consequence. An instance of this is seen in his correspondence with Cooke, the engraver, regarding a proposal to continue his drawings for "The Southern Coast," in the year 1827. The substance of it is contained in a long letter from Cooke

to Turner, dated January 1, 1827, and printed at length in Thornbury (page 187, 1876, and subsequent editions). Reference is made to this affair in Chapter 2 of this work. After the dispute with Cooke, Turner began his series, on an alphabetical plan, of "England and Wales," a project which occupied him during ten years. This is his largest series, and was engraved the most worthily by the band of craftsmen he had trained. Of the drawings, Mr. Thornbury says that "they epitomized the beauties of his own country," but on the contrary, they depart more and more from local truth, and become symphonies of colour and composition—impressions rather than records of the scenery which inspired them.

In the exhibition of this year were five important pictures. Of one of them there is a characteristic story. The work was entitled "Now for the Painter" (painter—a ship's rope). Thornbury says that in 1826 Stanfield had painted a picture of a calm, which he named "Throwing the Painter," but was unable to complete it in time for the exhibition. Callcott, hearing of it, executed a work to which he gave the title of "Dutch Fishing-boat missing the Painter," a studio joke. Turner, wishing to carry on the fun, produced this picture of 1827, "Now for the Painter." Mr. Hamerton sees in this some little self-glorification. Regarding the title as a pun, he assumes that Turner meant "Now for the real painter, see what I can do." He differs from Thornbury also in regard to the title of Callcott's picture. But whether the title was intended humorously or not, the picture marked a considerable advance upon his earlier sea-painting. It has an extended title, "Pas de Calais; Fishing-boats off Calais." The picture, "Rembrandt's Daughter," in the same exhibition, showed the figure in a red robe. It is said that it hung next to a portrait of a member of Dublin University, wearing a still redder gown, and that Turner added red lead and vermilion to his painting on Varnishing Day, in order to out-do the brilliancy of its neighbour. Another picture of 1827, "Mortlake Terrace : Summer Evening," has an interesting anecdote attached to it, which throws light upon Turner's technical carelessness. In this work, a river scene, with boats and barges, he has introduced a dog which is barking from a parapet. Thornbury says "Mr. Tom Taylor adduces the dog as a proof of Turner's reckless readiness of resource when an effect in art was wanted. Suddenly conceiving that a dark object here would throw back the distance and increase the aerial effect, Turner instantly cut a dog out of black paper and stuck him on the wall, where he still remains,

for, either satisfied or forgetful, he never replaced him by a painted one." This is a quotation from the *Manchester Guardian* respecting the pictures in the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857.

Another notable picture of this year is "Port Ruysdael." This title was given to two pictures, the one in question and another of the year 1844. There is no such port, and as Mr. Hamerton says, Turner probably intended to honour the memory of a great predecessor in art. As will be seen, in another chapter, Turner greatly admired the pictures of Ruysdael, and in more than one example, set himself at rivalry with that artist. Mr. Hamerton, however, takes occasion to depreciate Ruysdael. Had he lived a few years longer, he would have found himself in some disagreement with a more modern and generous estimate of his power.

The year 1828 was one of the most memorable in the life and artistic career of Turner. In the first place it was the year of the painting, though not of the exhibition, of "Ulysses deriding Polyphemus," one of, if not the greatest, of his pictures. This work is illustrated in the present volume, and a description of it, with some critical remarks upon it, will be found on page 105. Biographically, the year is interesting as marking his election to the Council of the Royal Academy. In this year he re-visited Rome, and in Thornbury's "Life" are some letters from that city to Sir Francis Chantrey and George Jones, R.A. In his letter to Chantrey he gives an account of the work of his compatriots who lived and worked in Rome, and in that addressed to Jones he gives a short, but interesting account of his travels. Turner exhibited some pictures during his stay in Rome, but they met with little appreciation. There was there at the time an English tradesman who sold mustard. The Roman critics said, in allusion to the dominant tone of some of Turner's works, that "one Englishman sold mustard and the other painted it." Pictures of the year included "Petworth Park," "Dido directing the Equipment of the Fleet" (in the manner of Claude), two views of East Cowes Castle, and "Boccaccio relating the Tale of the Bird-cage." The latter picture is painted in imitation of Stothard, and there is no corresponding story in Boccaccio. Painted without any inspiration, it is one of the least successful of Turner's works. In 1828, Turner began a series of drawings for *The Keepsake*, *The Anniversary*, and other periodical works. The following year saw the exhibition of "Ulysses," "The Loretto Necklace," "The Banks of the Loire," and "Messieurs les Voyageurs on their Return from Italy,"

possibly a scene observed by Turner when returning from his Italian tour. It is dated January 22, 1829.

The year 1830 was for Turner a period of sorrow. His father died, the only human being to whom he can be said to have been devotedly attached. Friendships he made, though since his youth they had been lacking in intimacy, but his father had been his familiar companion during his fifty-five years of life. Though quite unable to understand the great genius of his son, the elder Turner had been his "willing slave," as Mr. Trimmer says. He had entered into the secrets of his technique as no other person had been allowed to do. His life, in his declining years, had been entirely given up to more or less menial tasks in the studio, in taking care of the Gallery, and of the house. He was miserly on his son's behalf and had many eccentric qualities; but he seems to have lived in the warmth of that son's success—it was all he asked of life. He was buried in St. Paul's Church, Covent Garden, and his son erected a monument to his memory, with a characteristic epitaph, wanting, as all Turner's literary efforts were, in clearness and precision of meaning. Turner was very much distressed at his death, and never appeared to be the same man afterwards. In the same year, Sir Thomas Lawrence, one of his few friends, died; and this also was the cause of much grief to him. As an indication of the extent of his feeling in regard to both these bereavements, the following extract from a letter to George Jones, R.A., may not be without interest :—

"London : February, 1830."

"Dear Jones—I delayed answering yours until the chance of this finding you in Rome, to give you some account of the dismal prospect of Academic affairs, and of the last sad ceremonies paid yesterday to departed talent gone to that bourne from whence no traveller returns. Alas ! only two short months Sir Thomas followed the coffin of Dawe to the same place. We then were his pall-bearers. Who will do the like for me, or when, God only knows how soon. My poor father's death proved a heavy blow upon me, and has been followed by others of the same dark kind. However, it is something to feel that gifted talent can be acknowledged by the many who yesterday waded up to their knees in snow and muck to see the funeral pomp swelled up by carriages of the great, without the persons themselves."

In the exhibition was a sketch by Turner, from memory, of the "Funeral of Sir Thomas Lawrence."

The other pictures of 1830 were "Pilate washing his Hands," "A View of Orvieto," "Palestrina," and "Calais Sands," the latter probably the beautiful work now in the Bury Art Gallery.

This year was further notable for Turner's return to Scotland in order to make the drawings, twenty-four in number, for illustrating the poems of Sir Walter Scott. On this occasion Sir Walter joined him on his journeys in the neighbourhood of Abbotsford, as we are told by Lockhart. Turner afterwards illustrated the prose works of Scott. Of these drawings Mr. Thornbury aptly remarks, "his works betray no special appreciation of the poet, they are distinct creations, with a tender and exquisite beauty of their own." Some of these drawings are amongst the most lovely of the artist's water-colour works, particularly "Inverness Bridge"; and "Loch Corriskin" is one of the most impressive.

In the same year were made some of the charming drawings for Rogers' "Italy." Among all Turner's works these drawings stand out particularly for the exquisite delicacy of their execution. Some of them have little relationship to the scenes described, and in general they are independent works of art rather than illustrations. The peculiar form of the vignette which they take was excellently handled by the artist, who contrived, as Mr. Hamerton says, to cause the objects to appear into being out of nothingness. Their colour, perhaps intended to guide the engraver, but more probably the expression of a very personal emotion, is of the most tender beauty. Had its peculiarity been isolated the cause might have been sought in the engraver's directions, but in truth, the spirit of Italy seems always to have affected Turner's colour-sense, and to have aroused his imagination.

The exhibition of 1831 contained two classical pictures, "Caligula's Palace and Bridge," and the "Vision of Medea," both titles accompanied in the catalogue by quotations from "The Fallacies of Hope." "Caligula's Palace" is one of the most beautiful of Turner's classical pictures. Thornbury suggests that the figures introduced into it were executed by Goodall; if so it was a happy collaboration, for the work, in design and colour, is an epitome of Turner's enjoyment of Roman story, though, as usual, its details are not all warranted by history. "The Vision of Medea," exhibited at Rome in 1828, like the other pictures with which he proposed to impress the Italian art-public, is less successful. "Watteau Painting," exhibited in the same year, is more interesting from a technical than an æsthetic point of view, it

PEACE: BURIAL AT SEA

(of Sir David Wilkie)

Painted 1841. *Exhibited* 1842.

In the National Gallery British Art.

being a commentary upon Fresnoy's "Art of Painting"—"White, when it shines with unstained lustre clear, may bear an object back or bring it near." A similar picture shown at the same time is "Lord Percy under Attainder, 1606." The "Catalogue of the Turner Collection" informs us that the lady in yellow in the picture is taken from a picture by Van Dyck, at Petworth. A finer work of the 1831 exhibition was "Stranded Vessels off Yarmouth making Signals of Distress," in which the Manby life-saving apparatus is introduced.

In 1831, Turner's namesake, Charles Turner, engraved a portrait of him. His health at this time was not so good as usual, his visit to Scotland having rather exhausted his strength. It was in this year, June 10, that Turner signed the will, appointing G. Jones, R.A., Rev. Henry Trimmer, Samuel Rogers, and Charles Turner executors, in which he made such benefactions to art. This document, which has been the subject of violent controversy and of expensive litigation, resulted in charities to artists and a magnificent gift of his pictures to the nation. It will be found set out in full in Thornbury's "Life." Whatever were the motives which prompted the gift (and they have been variously construed) it is certain that all lovers of art have greatly benefited; not only in the possibility of forming an opinion of the work of one of the greatest of landscape painters by a long series of his best works, chosen by himself as completely representative of his powers and his imagination, but also in the stimulus they give, by their peculiar challenge to other painters, for comparative study and research regarding the whole subject of painting.

In 1832, Turner was again in France. In the Academy he exhibited "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage—Italy," illustrated in this work, and discussed at another point; it is one of the most splendid of his Italian dreams. Several other pictures were shown at the same time, among them "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego coming forth from the Burning Fiery Furnace," a picture conceived in the following manner, according to the artist's friend, Jones. "Turner asked his friend what he intended to paint for the ensuing exhibition of 1832. Jones replied that he proposed a picture of 'The Fiery Furnace.' Turner said, 'A good subject, I'll do it also. What size will you do it?' Jones thought kit-cat; Turner agreed. Jones suggested upright on panel; Turner also would paint an upright on panel, and desired Jones to order two panels, and if, while painting on his, Turner should enter the room,

Jones was to hide it instantly. Jones naïvely concludes, 'The pictures were painted and exhibited in 1832. The members of the Academy were surprised to find that they had been executed with the most perfect sympathy.' " Another of Turner's pictures of this year was "The Landing of William of Orange." Of still another of the works of 1832, "Helvoetsluys : the *City of Utrecht*, 64, going to Sea," Leslie, in his "Autobiographical Recollections," tells the following story. "In 1832, when Constable exhibited his 'Opening of Waterloo Bridge,' a sea-piece by Turner was next to it—a grey picture, beautiful and true, but with no positive colour in any part of it. Constable's Waterloo seemed as if painted with liquid gold and silver, and Turner came several times into the room while he was heightening with vermilion and lake the decorations and flags of the City barges. Turner stood behind him, looking from the 'Waterloo' to his own picture, and at last brought his palette, and putting a round daub of red, somewhat bigger than a shilling, on his grey sea, went away without a word. The intensity of the red lead, made more vivid by the coolness of the picture, caused even the vermilion and lake of Constable to look weak. I came into the room just as Turner left it. 'He has been here,' said Constable, 'and fired a gun.' The great man did not come into the room for a day and a half; and then in the last moments that were allowed for painting, he glazed the scarlet seal he had put on his picture, and shaped it into a buoy." This anecdote is abridged from the quotation by Thornbury, who says it is a matchless story. It certainly points to the invariable concern in Turner's mind that his picture should attract the attention of visitors to the exhibition, at least, as quickly as those of his colleagues. There is no doubt that Turner and Constable were very appreciative of the art of the other. In the year under consideration, Constable wrote, of one of Turner's pictures, "I remember most of Turner's early works, among them was one of singular intricacy and beauty; it was a canal with numerous boats, making thousands of beautiful shapes, and I think the most complete work of genius I ever saw." In 1833, Turner again illustrated Byron, in Finden's "Landscape and Portrait Illustrations to Byron's works." These drawings were founded upon sketches by Reinagle and others.

The same year Turner's early patron, Dr. Munro, died, and at his sale Turner re-purchased many of his own drawings. The remarkable happenings of this eventful year were, however, the tour which produced some wonderful drawings for the "Rivers of France," and the exhibition of his first Venetian

pictures. On the visits to France for the "Rivers" he was accompanied by Mr. Leith Ritchie, who was concerned in the publication, and wrote some descriptions of the places included. But perhaps there was never a more unsuccessful collaboration. Mr. Ritchie was critical of the unfaithfulness to actual fact in Turner's delineations of the scenery through which they passed, as, no doubt, he was justified in being, because the object in the first instance was topographical. But to-day we recognize that these drawings contain some of Turner's finest inspirations in colour and design. What though the details of the landscape are modified and altered? Here is the spirit of French landscape, the essence of it distilled in the crucible of this great artist's genius. Of the sixty subjects which were produced in three succeeding years five are reproduced in this volume, and are discussed in their proper place, it is sufficient here to point out that they were swiftly executed on grey paper, and are really studies of sunlight and atmosphere rather than views of places. And in spite of the speed, and the use of opaque colour, which might at first sight cause them to be regarded as notes for further elaboration, these drawings are among Turner's happiest works in regard to their management of line and composition. The series, then, would have rendered the year 1833 exceptionally notable in his career had it not been that in splendour and scale the first of his pictures of Venice proclaimed a still greater mastery. This work was "Venice: the Dogana, the Campanile of San Marco, the Ducal Palace, and Bridge of Sighs, with Canaletti Painting." Topographical painting had long been left behind, but from this time onwards the pictures of Turner are purely interpretations or impressions of the scenes he visited.

Mr. Thornbury says that Turner never tired of the enchantment of Venice but that he never rightly appreciated the poetry of her Oriental Gothic palaces, and always seemed inclined to whiten the buildings in accordance with the conventional notions of classical architecture acquired in the office of the architectural draughtsman. If any example were necessary of the total lack of understanding of the art of Turner in Victorian times this would be a sufficient instance. For at the risk of partial eulogy, even approaching the enthusiasm of Ruskin himself, those who have studied his works in our day will proclaim him the supreme expositor of Venetian charm. Form, definition, and photographic truth had, no doubt, been gradually abandoned, and in their place was substituted a truth of light and colour and atmosphere

never before achieved in the history of painting. The three typical examples of Turner's Venetian style illustrated in this volume are discussed in the chapter dealing with Turner as a precursor of the modern style of painting; but it is necessary to mark in this biographical section the wonderful effect which his impressions of Venice made upon his art. And this seems the appropriate point, when he exhibits the first of this surprising series of colour symphonies. Mr. Monkhouse speaks of Venice as the last home of Turner's imagination. It may be that in the future that city will be regarded as his most powerful source of inspiration.

The picture of 1833 did no more than foreshadow the gorgeous visions of his later years; as at that time he still adhered to realism of representation. To be more exact, the details he included in the picture were naturalistic, though their arrangement was governed by his sense of their pictorial and expressive value in his composition. The year 1834 was scarcely less auspicious. Some of the Scottish and French drawings for Scott's works were published, and some further illustrations to Byron; as also were continued the drawings for Rogers' "Italy." Of the oil-paintings exhibited, one of the most notable is "The Golden Bough," a work of the class of "Childe Harold"; serene and lovely. It is based upon a subject from the sixth book of the "Æneid," though the title is accompanied by a quotation from "The Fallacies of Hope." There were other pictures shown at the same time, a "St. Michael's Mount" and "Venice : the Canal of the Giudecca"—not the picture reproduced in this work, which was painted in 1840. In 1835 were published Turner's illustrations to Milton; and the exhibited pictures included "Ehrenbreitstein," "Venice from the Porch of Madonna della Salute," and "The Burning of the Two Houses of Parliament." Of the latter picture an artist of the day, Scarlett Davis, has an interesting anecdote. "I have no artistical chat for you," he writes in a letter to a friend, "further than that Turner has painted a large picture of the 'Burning of the Two Houses of Parliament'; but I have heard it spoken of as a failure—a devil of a lot of chrome. He finished it on the walls the last two days before the Gallery opened to the public. I am told it was good fun to see the great man whacking away with about fifty stupid apes standing round him, and I understand he was cursedly annoyed—the fools kept peeping into his colour-box and examining all his brushes and colours."

Of the Venetian picture there are two contemporary criticisms, quoted by

Mr. Monkhouse, which reveal the diverse opinions held at the time in regard to Turner's later work. *Blackwood's Magazine* refers to "Venice from the Porch of Madonna della Salute" as "a flimsy, white-washed meagre assemblage of architecture, starting off ghostlike into unnatural perspective, as if frightened at the affected blaze of some dogger vessels. . . . As to Venice, nothing can be more unlike its character." On the other hand, Mr. Ruskin, then seventeen years of age, speaks thus: "Dreamlike and dim, but glorious, the unnumbered palaces lift their shafts out of the hollow sea—pale ranks of motionless flame—their mighty towers sent up to heaven like tongues of more eager fire—their grey domes looming vast and dark, like eclipsed worlds—their sculptured arabesques and purple marble fading farther and fainter, league beyond league, lost in the light of the distance." Modern opinion in regard to Turner's Venetian works is certainly more on the side of Ruskin than of *Blackwood's*, though, as advanced in another chapter, the point of view is entirely different.

In 1836, Turner visited France, Switzerland, and part of Italy with Mr. Munro, of Novar, one of the most earnest and enlightened of his patrons. And of this tour, as Thornbury says, there are fuller records than of any other. It is fortunate that this should be so, for the results of the tour were so very important in his later art-life. Mr. Munro said that Turner enjoyed himself in his way, though he objected to questions about his technique. One incident related has some significance as to the artist's water-colour method at the period. "On one occasion, in the Aosta Valley, he was dissatisfied with a sketch, which he altered and sponged till the drawing got a sort of white greenness about it which was not pleasant. He became quite fretful thereat, and his abuse of colour-sketching wound up with the remark, 'I could have done twice as much with the pencil.' His first inquiry in the morning, when they started to sketch, was always, 'Have you got the sponge?'—it was with the sponge that he obtained many of his misty and aerial effects." (Thornbury.) Mr. Munro says that the sketches were rapid, and were afterwards, with the aid of his tremendous memory, completed at the inn. His touch was so sure and decisive; he used no maulstick; and his materials were of the rudest—brushes worn away to single hairs, and thrice as valuable as they were when new.

In 1836, Mr. Wells, an early friend, who had originally suggested the "Liber Studiorum," died. The same year included in its output some drawings

of views of India from sketches by Lieutenant White. Of the exhibited pictures, "Mercury and Argus" was the most important. Even at this late period Turner still meditated upon his resolve to eclipse Claude. "Mercury and Argus" is the result of such a meditation—a beautiful, sunny, Italian picture, rich in detail and full in colour. Other pictures of the year were "Juliet and her Nurse" and "Rome, from Mount Aventine." Of the first-named the public took no notice, and the critics were hostile, facts which aroused the sense of justice in the heart of the young Ruskin and eventually led to the writing of "Modern Painters."

In this year Turner reached the height of his normal artistic growth; though he afterwards produced masterpieces, as we shall see, a change came over the whole spirit of his art; his genius took a great leap, inexplicable to his contemporaries. It has required three parts of a century to demonstrate that the later art of Turner was not senile, nor decadent, but was the inevitable result of a conviction that the art of landscape painting, as formerly known and practised, had reached its utmost limit of development. Representation could go no further; natural objects in their actual form and colour, even when modified by the personality of a great genius, had become inadequate as symbols of the emotional force which impelled that genius to paint. The imagination was hampered and restrained by the necessity of rendering such symbols intelligible, the breadth of poetic vision could no longer be communicated by them. Turner directed his art thenceforward to the creative source of these symbolic objects. His pictorial system resolved itself into a simplified, yet greatly extended, use of those media by which vision is accomplished; the light, the atmosphere, and the colour which they combine to create. He was not always successful in wielding these tremendous forces, but when he did succeed he exceeded all that had ever been achieved. This much it is necessary to premise before considering the facts of his physical decline.

SAN BENEDETTO, LOOKING TOWARDS FUSINA

Painted 1843. *In the National Gallery.*

CHAPTER IV

Later Years

LIKE that of all innovators, Turner's reputation did not escape the attacks of jealousy and ignorance. From this time onward the enemies of his art became increasingly numerous and virulent. He still was to produce masterpieces before which they were compelled to be silent, yet the change had already taken place. He who was once regarded as a demi-god had begun to shed his divinity. In 1837, Turner illustrated Campbell's "Poetical Works," and in the same year his friend and patron, Lord Egremont, of Petworth, died; one of the most discerning judges of art in his time, and one of the few collectors who consistently encouraged and appreciated Turner. About this time Turner resigned his position as Professor of Perspective, at the Royal Academy. He had retained his post for thirty years, though he had actually lectured only during two or three years. It has been said already that he took his duties seriously, but that he suffered from an inability to express his thoughts in language; and he himself confessed that he knew more than he was able to impart. An amusing story is told by Thornbury in this connexion. "On one memorable occasion the hour had come for his lecture. Soon the Professor appeared, and the buzz of the students subsided. The Professor mounted his desk, and every eye was fixed on him and his blackboard. The Professor, however, betrayed signs of confusion and perturbation. He dives now into one pocket and now into another—no! He proceeds to open his discourse; but what he says is, 'Gentlemen, I've been and left my lecture in the hackney coach.' "

Mr. Ruskin also sheds light upon these lectures. "The zealous care with which Turner endeavoured to do his duty is proved by a large series of drawings. . . . In teaching generally—he would neither waste time nor spare it—he would look over a student's drawing at the Academy, point to a defective part, make a scratch on the paper at the side, say nothing. If the student saw what was wanted, and did it, Turner was delighted; but if the student could not follow, Turner left him." Turner, Thornbury says, used Hamilton's "Perspective."

Turner was again on the Academy Council in 1837, and it is recorded by one of his friends that he "was ever anxious to allay anger and bitter controversy. Often I have heard him, in subdued tones, try to persuade the excited to moderation; he would do this by going behind the speaker, and by a touch or word soothe an acrimonious tone by his gentleness. He was unable to speak, but would by his attempt to express himself delay a question until it received more serious and calm consideration."

This year he exhibited "Apollo and Daphne," "The Parting of Hero and Leander," a "Street Scene in Venice," and a "Snow Storm, Avalanche, and Inundation," in the Academy; and at the British Institution, "Regulus leaving Rome." None of these pictures is remarkable; it remained for the following year to show the rising curve of the veteran painter's mastery. This was the year of the "Ancient Italy," "Modern Italy," and "Phryne going to the Baths as Venus." The first two, imaginative compositions, were painted for Mr. Munro, and the second of them is now one of the treasures of the Art Gallery of Glasgow. The third picture, "Phryne going to the Baths," one of the most powerful works of the artist, is in the Turner collection. Mr. Thornbury finds the figures detestable and the shadows scarlet; it is, however, in its treatment of light and of distance, and in its wonderful drawing of trees, a landmark in the history of Turner's art. It heralds the decline, but in itself it has beauty and splendour of colour and design.

In the year 1838, the series of plates of "England and Wales" was brought to an end, and the stock and copper-plates were offered for sale by auction. Turner appeared at the sale and bought the whole for £3000 just before the auctioneer asked for the first bid. Mr. Bohn, the publisher, was much disappointed, as he was anxious to buy parts of the series. Turner explained that he had interfered in order to prevent the sale of cheap prints. Mr. Bohn replied that he desired, not the plates, but the printed copies. Turner then agreed to sell the prints to Mr. Bohn, but asked an unconscionable price, failed to complete his bargain, and left the stock to decay in his house. In this year Turner visited Switzerland.

In 1839 he illustrated Moore's "Epicurean." The drawings are vignettes, and are well designed, though they are less generally appreciated than his former illustrations to works of an imaginative character. "The Fighting *Téméraire*," described on page 107 and reproduced on page 41, is the outstanding picture of this year. Thornbury tells us that the subject of the picture was

suggested by Clarkson Stanfield. As Stanfield and Turner were in a boat on the river at Greenwich they saw the old battleship being towed to her moorings at Deptford. "There's a fine subject, Turner," said Stanfield. Turner seized upon the idea, with the result that he produced one of his greatest masterpieces. Mr. Ruskin has claimed for this picture that it is the last work "executed with his entire and perfect power"; and to many students of painting it is his most noble work. It is said that this magnificent triumph of Turner's genius might have been bought in the Academy for £150; though Thornbury quotes a correspondent who tried to buy it but failed to induce Turner to put any price whatever upon it. No doubt he had already resolved that it was to represent him worthily in the National Collection. It is said to be the picture he himself prized most highly. There is a story to the effect that in the exhibition it suffered from the proximity of a more brilliant picture, and that Turner heightened the colour with orange and yellow and vermilion in order that its effect should not be diminished thereby. So many similar stories are related of rivalry of this kind that little reliance can be placed upon them; but this incident is told by Lupton, one of Turner's engravers, and is, consequently, more than usually credible. It is, however, difficult to believe that a picture conceived and executed with such grandeur and dignity of feeling could have been subjected to a momentary caprice of such a nature. It is preferable to think that on appearing in the fuller illumination of an exhibition gallery the picture required to be brought up to the imagined key of brilliance. In Thornbury's "Life" is an interesting passage respecting an assumed symbolism—of literary ideas—in the details of this picture. Those who are not content to see the work pictorially, and require a story to accompany it, will find the remarks on page 462 of the later editions of the book. "This was the last picture of his (Turner's) at which no stone was thrown," says Mr. Monkhouse.

In the same year appeared, "Ancient Rome—Agrippina landing with the Ashes of Germanicus," and "Modern Rome—Campo Vaccino." "Ancient Rome," again, is an imaginative work which is inaccurately conceived from the historical point of view. In addition to the placing of important architecture on the opposite side of the Tiber, Turner was either ignorant or careless of the fact that Agrippina landed with the ashes, not at Rome, but at Brindisi. The picture is impressive and poetical, in spite of these inaccuracies. Eighteen-hundred and forty was also a year of important pictures. "Bacchus

and Ariadne" recalls Titian, and from Titian's picture (in the National Gallery) he "frankly borrowed the figures," says Hamerton. It is a circular work, not very successful, and chiefly remarkable for the return to rivalry at this late period and after such great original work, with the artist he had emulated earlier in his career. "Venice—The Bridge of Sighs" was exhibited at the same time, as also was "Venice from the Giudecca," reproduced on page 11 in this work. "The New Moon" was another of the year's productions, and "The Slave Ship," and another celebrated work "Rockets and Blue Lights."

The Venetian pictures are considered in another chapter, and perhaps the most remarkable of all these works from a biographical point of view is "The Slave Ship." The decline of Turner's powerful imagination is shown most clearly in this picture. It is splendid in colour and full of profound feeling, but as Mr. Monkhouse points out, it has a melodramatic quality which detracts from its grandeur. It contains unnecessary details, and some of them are very harrowing. On the whole, however, the pictorial constituents of the picture are magnificent. There is a wild, but not disordered, rhythm of line and mass, splendid mastery of light and shade, and the emotion roused in the spectator is authentic and intense.

Mr. Ruskin's description of this work is one of his finest pieces of artistic exposition. The picture was at one time in his possession, but he afterwards sold it to America, where it met with a very mixed reception; one American artist referred to it as "the most infernal piece of claptrap ever painted." Mr. Hamerton regards this severity as a reaction against the eloquent praise of Mr. Ruskin. No doubt his inference is true, and the example is by no means singular.

"Venice from the Giudecca" is dealt with in another chapter, and the other pictures of 1840 do not call for particular mention. Mr. Thornbury, basing himself doubtless on Ruskin, is of opinion that after 1840 foliage rarely occurs in Turner's pictures, and when it does so it is ill-painted.

The year 1841 had also its triumphs. Turner was now, in respect of his later period, at the height of his power. It is true that the decline had begun, but the flame of genius was still burning and leaping. Colour was at this time his greatest pre-occupation, as is seen in the exhibited pictures "The Ducal Palace," the "Giudecca, la Donna della Salute and San Giorgio," especially, and in others of less importance. It is significant that

now it ceases to be necessary to mention all the pictures of the year, though it was important in the period immediately preceding.

There is a letter, quoted by Thornbury, from Turner to Miller, a favourite engraver, dated October, 1841, in which the painter gives instructions as to the engraving of a plate after one of his pictures. In this (so far from being evidence of declining mental power is it), Turner rises to a clearness of literary expression which he had never before attained.

On November 25, 1841, died Sir Francis Chantrey, a friend for whom Turner had a great regard. The day after his death Turner called at the sculptor's house, and found there the friend of both, George Jones, R.A. He was not capable of speaking to him, however; he was only able to wring his hand and "rush out of the house without uttering a word." It was in 1841 that John Gilbert, afterwards knighted, made a study for his portrait of Turner as he was completing a picture on the walls of the British Institution.

The year 1842 also produced memorable pictures. "The Burial of Wilkie," illustrated in this work, was one of them. It may be left to the reader, after examining it, to decide whether Mr. Thornbury was right when he said : "In 1842, Turner's power of sight and accuracy was fast declining, and even brown sherry could not brace the once dexterous fingers or clarify the clouding eyes." Certainly "The Burial of Wilkie" had been painted in the previous year, at a time when Turner was profoundly touched by Wilkie's death. Mr. Thornbury founds his despairing conclusion on the picture "The Exile and the Rock Limpet" (Napoleon at St. Helena). It would be more accurate to infer from this picture that Turner was attempting a subject impossible to be expressed by the resources of painting. The result is certainly melodramatic, but it might have occurred at any period of his career. The fact that it was parodied in *Punch* has possibly caused it to be regarded with some amount of ridicule. It is not ridiculous, though it is confused. Confusion seemed to overwhelm the mind of Turner whenever he made advances to the muse of letters; and here is a subject appropriate only to literary treatment.

Another picture which was generally criticized was the "Snowstorm off a Harbour's Mouth," also of 1842; a picture studied at Harwich. It was not an invention, as will be understood from the following statement made by the Rev. Charles Kingsley : "I had taken my mother and a cousin to see

Turner's pictures, and as my mother knows nothing about art, I was taking her down the gallery to look at the large 'Richmond Park'; but as we were passing the 'Snowstorm,' she stopped before it, and I could hardly get her to look at any other picture; and she told me a great deal more about it than I had any notion of, though I have seen many snowstorms. She had been in such a scene on the coast of Holland during the war. When, sometime afterwards, I thanked Turner for his permission for her to see the pictures, I told him that he would not guess what had most caught my mother's fancy, and then named the picture; but he said: 'I did not paint it to be understood, but I wished to show what such a scene was like. I got the sailors to lash me to the mast to observe it. I was lashed for four hours, and I did not expect to escape, but I felt bound to record it if I did. But no one had any business to like the picture.' 'But,' said I, 'my mother once went through just such a scene, and it brought it all back to her.' 'Is your mother a painter?' 'No.' 'Then she ought to have been thinking of something else.' " In view of the discussion in another chapter as to Turner's pictorial intention in the making of his pictures, the question "Is your mother a painter?" is illuminating. As Turner said, he "did not paint it to be liked." He endeavoured, instead, to record the experience of a remarkable impression made by Nature upon his mind and feelings. The picture was called by its detractors "Soapsuds and Whitewash," a description very much resented by the artist. It was, however, again an impossible subject.

In the spring of 1842 Turner was very ill, and his general health became seriously impaired thereby for the future. In the year 1843 he enjoyed his last delight in foreign travel; and made sketches in the neighbourhood of St. Gothard and the Lake of Lucerne. There is, unfortunately, no record of his journey.

This is the year of publication of the first volume of Ruskin's "Modern Painters," an event of the greatest importance in the history of art in England. It is open to question whether the effect of this wonderful book was good or bad from the point of view of painting. While it praised and glorified Turner's pictures, it sometimes praised them for the wrong qualities, and lowered its own authority by giving credit to the artist for intentions he never had. In its eulogies of Turner's contemporaries, the book lent its weight to the reputations of artists long since forgotten and never at any time to be mentioned in the same breath with Turner. But it did, for the

NORHAM CASTLE

"Rivers of England"

Painted c. 1822-3. *In Turner Collection.*

first time in literature, attempt to expound by the symbols of one art the qualities and excellences of another. There had been plenty of art criticism before Ruskin's time, but there was neither analysis nor exposition. And, therefore, though the effect of this most glowing prose was at times to defeat by the vehemence of its enthusiasm the intention of the writer, it remains for us, as well as for students of literature, a landmark. It is no less a landmark in the declining life of Turner than in the history of art.

The pictures exhibited in 1843 were still more dreamlike and unsubstantial than ever, "The *Sun of Venice* going to Sea" being one of the most beautiful. The Venetian pictures are considered in connexion with the illustrations to this volume; the other pictures were "Shade and Darkness, or the Evening of the Deluge," "Light and Colour, or the Morning of the Deluge," and "The Opening of the Walhalla, 1842." The latter picture, it is suggested, was painted from an engraving, and we are told that "delighted with the evidence of Bavarian love of art and the blessings of peace supplied by the grand erection, Turner sent the picture as a present to King Ludwig; but the monarch, unable to make anything of it, and perhaps ignorant of the artist's existence, lost no time in packing it up again and returning the gift." The titles of the two pictures of the Deluge point to the fact that Turner had now come to concern himself almost entirely with questions of light and shadow and colour, mental conceptions, abstract speculations, in pigment.

The year 1844 saw still more of the pictures of Venetian light and air; a second picture of the imaginary Port Ruysdael, and still more memorable, one of the greatest of Turner's works, "Rain, Steam, and Speed," reproduced in this volume on page 51. Mr. Hammersley, a contemporary painter, gives an account of a visit to Turner's studio in this year which shows us a pathetic portrait of the artist's declining years : "On the 26th November, 1844, I paid my second visit to the Turner Gallery. I shall not readily forget this visit, though it began and ended in something less than ten minutes. I entered the dingy dining-room . . . and was immediately joined by Turner, who, as before, led me up to his gallery. Our proceedings then resembled our proceedings on the former visit, distinguished from it, however, by the exceeding tactiturnity, yet restlessness of my great companion, who waved about and occasionally clutched a letter which he held in his hand. I feared to break the dead silence, varied only by the slippered scrape of Turner's feet as we paced from end to end the dim and dusty

apartment. At last he stood abruptly and, turning to me, said : 'Mr. Hammersley, you *must* excuse me. I cannot stay another moment; the letter I hold in my hand has just been given to me, and it announces the death of my friend Callcott.' He said no more. I saw his fine grey eyes fill as he vanished, and I left at once."

About this time, Turner, who had outlived many of those who formerly defended him, was the object of some ridicule on the part of critics of his later work; which he felt very keenly. Doubtless, in his vanity as the author of "The Fallacies of Hope" he had given many an opening to them; and the wits, among whom were Thackeray and à Becket, while they caught the singularity of his pictures, made more fun of the quotations he attached to them. Turner regarded criticism as censure, and resented it accordingly. He was, as Mr. Ruskin remarks, acutely sensitive, like all high-strung people.

As an example of the thoughtlessness with which these humorists marked an artist as their butt, we are told that long afterwards Thackeray was shown some of Turner's finest water-colours, upon which he exclaimed : "I will never run down Turner again."

In the following year Turner's health gave way, and his mind and sight began to fail; and the decline of his power is easily to be traced in the pictures of the last five years or so of his painting life. He now, more than ever, attacked subjects which his art was incapable of treating with intelligibility and completeness. He aimed at the pictorial power of bringing actual sunlight upon his canvas. More and more frenzied became his efforts to reproduce a blinding brilliance, to exhaust the utmost limits of his palette in order to express this passion for light which had mastered his soul. This he had connected with Venice, her marble buildings and light-reflecting canals, but after 1846 he ceased to exhibit Venetian subjects. There are eleven of these subjects, and some who appreciate Turner would choose these, if choice had to be made, as, on the whole, the most distinguished efforts of his art. Indeed, little can be said of the pictures produced by Turner during the last few years of his life. In principle they are an attempt to develop his experiments in regard to the painting of sunlight, but the brain was too weary and the hand too feeble for their execution. We will, therefore, leave these last works to the catalogue of the National Collection, where most of them will be found, and trace as far as possible the domestic life of his last years.

It is interesting to know that Turner was impressed by the possibilities of photography, and from 1847 onwards he made several visits to the studio of Mr. Mayall, in Regent Street. In view of what has been advanced above as to Turner's concern about light, Mr. Mayall's remark that Turner came to him "always with some new notion about light" is pointed. The same gentleman speaks of Turner as falling into his old topic of the spectrum. To Mr. Mayall the great painter acted with much generosity, lending him money at a time when ruin threatened to overwhelm him and his business.

To the last, Turner upheld the greatness and seriousness of the profession of which he had become the chief ornament. In 1848, writing to a friend who asked his advice about art as a profession for his son, Turner says "it behoves you to weigh well the means in your power before you embark in a profession which requires more care, assiduity, and perseverance than any person can guarantee."

In the same year Turner entered into a business contract regarding the sale of some land to the South-Western Railway Company, in which transaction he showed that his mental powers, when his material interests were involved, were by no means unequal to the task he set them.

In 1848 he exhibited no picture in the Royal Academy. A letter to Mr. Fawkes, in 1849, makes mention of Ruskin, and acknowledges the goose-pie which Mr. Fawkes invariably sent to him at Christmas from Farnley Hall.

The pictures he exhibited in 1850 show the old artist returning to the ideas of his prime, to Troy, and the stories of Vergil. David Roberts, R.A., the painter, speaks of a dinner at his house in this year at which Turner was very agreeable, and quite vigorous for his age. On this occasion he made one of his best efforts at repartee. "Turner's health was proposed by an Irish gentleman who had attended his lectures on perspective, on which he complimented the artist. Turner made a short reply in a jocular way, and concluded by saying, rather sarcastically, that he was glad this honourable gentleman had profited so much by his lectures as thoroughly to understand perspective, for it was more than he did." On the same occasion an attempt was made to extract from Turner his address at a Thames-side lodging to which he periodically retired, living under the name of Mr. Booth; but without success. He kept the secret even from Mrs. Danby, his housekeeper.

Towards the latter part of the year 1851 Turner was missed from the meetings of the Royal Academy, and a letter was written to him by his

friends through David Roberts, asking him if he was ill and could not attend, to let them know so that they might visit him. In the letter they assured him that, if he desired it, the secret of his place of retirement would be kept. This letter was not answered for two weeks, when he called upon David Roberts, in Fitzroy Square, looking very ill and worn. He said: "You must not ask me, but whenever I come to town I will always come and see you." None of his friends had seen him for many months, and only once after this did he visit Roberts. Their anxiety caused them to search for him, and Mrs. Danby, in brushing an old coat belonging to the artist, found a letter from a friend in Chelsea which gave them an indication of his hiding-place. The housekeeper discovered him at Chelsea, dangerously ill, and informed a relative of Turner, who arrived only just in time to see the great painter alive.

Turner died on December 18, 1851. His career as an artist is the concern of other pages in the book, and this biographical sketch may close with a brief note upon his personal character.

An estimate of Turner as a man suffers from the want of sufficient information about his life. There are stories of his goodness of heart and generosity; just as there are anecdotes of his avarice and meanness. He appears to have had little or no belief in religion or in anything supernatural; yet he was one of the most ardent Nature-worshippers who ever lived. There were times when he was as proud as any man, and instances of his self-respect abound. And against these may be set jealousy of living friends and dead painters, and examples of smallness of mind astonishing in so prominent an artist.

The truth, no doubt, is that Turner was guided, like many others, by mixed motives, and that his conspicuous genius drew attention to his faults as well as to his virtues. If he cannot be regarded as a moral exemplar, he went through life without contravening the ordinary laws which govern society. If he insisted upon every right to which he was entitled in life, at his death he made great benefactions which have conferred incalculable benefits upon mankind at large—in regard to the pictures he bequeathed as an everlasting delight to his countrymen—and relieved from the fear of want some of his professional brethren, as well as offered material incentives to the young students of the future. He would not allow a scrap of paper upon which he had drawn the merest sketch to be appropriated without

payment, while, as we know, he gave to his profession and his country, all that he had acquired by genius and industry, assisted by the severest economy. Mixed motives indeed !

No doubt he was moved by an intense desire for an artistic immortality; yet, as has been shown, he could deliberately forego the immediate glory of the exhibition to enable other artists to gain an advantage in reputation.

His domestic life was passed amid comfortless surroundings, and the ordinary amenities of existence did not appeal to him. It has been suggested that he subjected himself to the effects of intoxicants; on the other hand, he denied himself the simplest luxuries. His person was at times neglected and shabby, and the graces of hospitality were absent from his home; yet he could arouse in his rivals a great admiration for the qualities of his mind, and drew to himself the praises of one of the most stern of all moralists, the mighty Ruskin. Rudeness was at times characteristic of him, but on occasion he could be courteous and considerate for the feelings of others. Slow to make friends, admitting a very favoured few to his intimacy, he felt their loss with a pathetic intensity. The birds and animals found in him a merciful protector, and oppression always stirred him deeply, for he loved liberty. The early disappointment which prevented his marriage no doubt caused the sour misanthropy of his old age, and his cynical disregard of public opinion in regard to his rather sordid amours.

It is possible that he was at heart tender, generous, and self-effacing, and that want of education and the vulgarity of his early surroundings had gradually rendered those qualities ineffective. The ill-paid and, in those days, somewhat menial, profession of his father caused habits of parsimony; the life of riverside London caused an atrophy of manners and gentle feeling at an early age; and, above all, the lack of education prevented that acquisition of the power of verbal expression which would have been so useful to him in the high social opportunities which came to him in later life, prevented in him the display of sentiment and charm which might well have been latent in his nature, and led to the egregious vanity of "The Fallacies of Hope."

His solitary habits have been attributed to an unprepossessing appearance, of which too much has been made. Those portraits of him which were not frankly intended for caricature, show him as certainly in possession of average good looks, especially in his youth. And we shall not read far in

the biographies of celebrated men before we discover that personal appearance does not supply more than an initial advantage, and that the qualities which render a man enduringly attractive are those of his heart and mind. A slovenly and eccentric manner of dress, and an indifference to a fine point of cleanliness, were, perhaps, more responsible than ugliness of person in Turner for some of the coldness with which his contemporaries regarded him.

One virtue he possessed in a degree unusual in his profession, that of unremitting industry. That Bohemianism for which the artists of generations ago were remarkable, but which has now almost become a legend, made no appeal to Turner; he lived for his art. Any intrusion upon this ruling motive he resented with the utmost irritability. His health, due to his active life, was robust, and he acquired the wealth and renown denied to so many of his brother artists. Can he, then, be said to have been a happy man? He had been deprived of those home influences that might have tempered his character, refined his nature, and provided an incentive for his work, nobler—because less selfish—than that which inspired him. We may doubt whether fame was a sufficient compensation for them.

It has already been said that little is to be found in the biography of the greatest of landscape artists giving that illuminating insight into character and motive which will reveal to us the spiritual cause of his art; there are few accounts of the lives of great men less satisfactory in this respect. If we would learn his secret we must seek it in his pictures. And however devoid the circumstances of his life may be of greatness, his work shows a power and majesty of conception, a refinement and delicacy of perception, and a facility and mastery of execution which speak of splendid gifts, assiduous cultivation, and single-minded devotion, rarely equalled in the history of painting.

VERNON

"Rivers of France"

THE POST ROAD FROM VERNON TO MANTES

"Rivers of France"

Painted c. 1833. *In Turner Collection.*

CHAPTER V

Turner as Picture-maker

TO the frequenters of picture exhibitions a century ago who came upon the works of Turner—though he was, as we cannot help but believe, the graphic poet of Nature, her true interpreter to his age—there must have appeared revolutionary elements in his work, and much that lay unrevealed for a later age to discover, since the poet is ever in advance of his contemporaries. Fifty years afterwards, when the prophet Ruskin had analysed and proclaimed his message in terms of an art not less beautiful than his own, it might have seemed that, as he was more fortunate in his advocate than any painter before or since, public appreciation was completely assured. And yet it is the peculiar province of art to contain something ever new, to have a message for every generation, never entirely to achieve perfect understanding, nor to exhaust the possibility of presenting truth in a new light.

To-day, at a distance of almost a century and a half since his birth, Turner is still studied, and still has something to say to us that our painters of this age do not or cannot say. Perhaps it is that in the particular field in which he worked he said all that was or is to be said, and that as he was presenting truth each generation must seek his message for itself, as truth has been sought from age to age. If it be said that he presented not the truth but an aspect of the truth, the answer may be that even an aspect of it may mean, in its presentation, one thing to one generation and another to the next; that art acts upon emotion, and emotion is so personal a thing that not an age merely, but every individual who is included in it, must approach perfection in his own way; must seek in revelation those elements which accord with his own spirit, and derive an especial pleasure from the beauty and significance of art. But it is evident that conditions of life may have effect on the spirit of man, and men living under similar conditions will tend to think and feel similar impulses. What art has to give to them will be appropriate to their spiritual necessities, and will probably be very different from what was gained by their forefathers.

Conditions of life and opportunities of culture being, then, in our age, different from those of former times, we shall look in Turner for qualities which the most gifted of our contemporaries have taught us to seek. Can we imagine that a generation taught by the Pre-Raphaelites to look for local colour and photographic naturalism in form would find in Turner what the Impressionists inculcated in regard to vibration of light, or characteristic significance in subject? And shall we, who have learnt to see a purely æsthetic use of artistic symbols, divorced entirely from literary association, and as much as possible from representation, find the same message in the paintings of Turner as did the adherents of either of these schools, not to mention the less thoughtful spectators of Victorian academic art? It is not to be expected, and the question for our consideration is whether or not Turner's work will bear examination from our more modern point of view. As it is certain that the advocates of the Pre-Raphaelite and of the Impressionistic method of painting have discovered in Turner emotional, intellectual, or spiritual enjoyment—for his reputation has increased from year to year—it would appear that for us also his work has a living interest as we view it from our standpoint. Let us seek to define what our requirements are, and how far Turner has given us material for our satisfaction.

We have, as has been said, abandoned the idea that subject is the only matter or even the main matter of importance in regard to a picture. The literary content may be within it; and representation, as for example, in a portrait, may be essential to its complete success. But other conditions must first be fulfilled. We ask, before deciding upon sublimity of subject, whether the pattern or design of the picture shows emotional or intellectual life. Not prettiness or ingenuity but significance is the object of our search. Do its lines, and the combination of its lines, touch us so as to arouse in our hearts and minds a vital and a satisfying interest? In short, does its rhythm express the intensity of the painter's thought, and does it arouse a corresponding intensity in us?

The importance of this has only to be regarded from the standpoint of the other arts to be immediately understood. Think of music or poetry without rhythm! Poetry without rhyme and music without bar-lines have appeared upon our horizon, more or less to our confusion, but the absence of rhythm is unthinkable. And according to the degree in which the painter creates this rhythm, subtle or forcible as the case may be, so is his emotional

force to be measured. It is this element which makes the sculpture of ancient Greece the touchstone of artistic quality. The majesty and grandeur of Phidias and the grace and delicacy of Praxiteles depend upon its use. This, then, is what we have come to consider essential in any work of art; in this matter is the personality of the painter revealed.

But rhythm is not confined to line or pattern alone, it must be extended to colour. Colour, in the present age, is no longer a local tint intended to enhance the verisimilitude of representation. It is required to perform two additional functions, first to make an attractive pattern balanced and repeated as the lines and shapes are repeated and balanced, and second to fulfil a definite emotional purpose, it being easy to establish that certain colours and combinations of colour, have certain corresponding effects upon our emotions. The use of colour for this æsthetic effect, apart from the nature of the subject of the picture, is an artistic requirement of modern times. The combination of form and colour into this decorative pattern, modified by accent and emphasis, by proportion and scale and space, may not have been so conscious in the art of the great masters of former times as it is in the art of the painters of to-day, but it was always there, though we have only lately learned to look for it. In all times, great painters have been symbolists; they have used the devices of their craft for the purpose of æsthetic as well as illustrative effect. It will naturally occur to a reflective mind that if these conditions are present, the illustrative subject matter will be more likely to receive adequate expression, and the picture will more surely arrive at greatness in proportion to the intention of its creator. It may be a fine picture apart from its subject, but it will be finer according as it is applied to a more extended purpose. No mere representation can contain these qualities, but representation or illustration may be included among them.

What Ruskin and his generation saw in Turner was his power of representation, his supreme power of illusion, of bringing to life upon his canvas the appearance of Nature in her most sublime moods and moments. What they left for us to discover was the æsthetic intention lying behind this splendid ability to represent Nature. Did this æsthetic intention exist, and have we really found it?

Let us seek it in the illustrations to this volume. Take for example, the finest of Turner's works, the picture "Ulysses deriding Polyphemus." Consider it first as a pattern of light and shade, of tones, and arrangement of shapes

and lines. The design of the picture is superb. The brilliant rays of the rising sun as they are thrown fanwise across the sky form the rhythmic motive. These rays are contrasted with the almost perpendicular masts on the right of the spectator. The diagonal line of the spar cutting across two of them repeats the fan shape, and the masts and spars and oars of Ulysses' galley again repeat the radiating theme. The arrangement of light and shade is equally pleasing, admirably balanced. The bright illumination of the eastern sky, springing from the intense spot of white at the horizon is softly graded across the upper part of the picture and carried to the mists upon which the light is reflected on the west. Half-tones under them and shadow between the sea and cloud, deeper still as the foreground is reached, make up the distribution without sudden contrast or opposition. The shapes of objects; the half obscure bulk of the Cyclops, reminding us of the wondrous majesty of Phidias's Olympus, the pyramidical shapes of the sails, the jagged rocks—also pyramidical—carry on the scheme of balance and repetition, and a few curved lines of ropes or drooping sails emphasize by contrast the firmness of the whole structural composition.

In regard to colour, here is combined the utmost brilliance and light. The colour, as Sir Walter Armstrong says, touches the limit of achievement. The deep blue water, the gold and orange and scarlet and green and crimson, the exquisite merging of these hues into each other, the pearliness of the misty atmosphere, all act powerfully upon the æsthetic feelings of those who look at the picture, even before the subject to which they have been applied is at all apprehended. It is a splendid piece of decoration, full of pictorial skill and imagination. And the subject is appropriate for the full exercise of Turner's gifts and qualities. The story is told with completeness and with simplicity. To quote the excellent description of Sir Robert Witt in his "Hundred Masterpieces of Painting"—"It is the thrilling moment when Ulysses, having blinded the monster Cyclops and regained the safe shelter of his ship, turns to fling one last taunt at his raging, but helpless captor, while the mariners hurriedly unfurl the sails and ply the oars of the gold and crimson galleys. The huge form of Polyphemus is dimly seen through the mist sprawling on the hills above, his arms thrown up in passionate gesture of impotent rage, and, to enhance the sense of strange wonder and magic, the sun is just rising."

In this work, subject—or illustration—is as important, and no more

important, than pictorial treatment; the happiest possible blending of the two elements which constitute the picture. It is true that the pictorial element has been extended to its utmost limits; almost so far as to prevent the enjoyment of that other most necessary constituent, the quality of the actual pigment. In striving for light and still more light, the painter has almost exceeded the boundaries of his craft.

Turn now to "The Fighting *Téméraire*." In regard to this subject, it is one of the most intensely moving of all Turner's pictures. No human figure is anywhere portrayed in it, and yet the whole canvas is permeated with the spirit of humanity; charged to the limits with human feeling. No doubt the associations connected with the old battleship arouse that feeling, which would not in the first place be aroused but for the title. But when the picture is examined it will be seen that by pictorial means the sentiment already suggested is perfectly and appropriately expressed, and that any other title would dispel the melancholy reflections in which the spectator has allowed himself to indulge. There is something intimately human about a great sailing ship, which is not to be found in any other work of man's hand. A house may call forth memories of home and beloved companions; a church may speak of profound spiritual experience; but a ship includes the element of peril from which, by interaction, man and vessel are continually endeavouring to escape. The mastery of intractable forces in which both are equally concerned gives to the ship a soul or living entity which no other inanimate object can attain in the estimation of those whose floating home she is. And this particular ship is for ever connected with the proudest of naval victories. So, as the *Téméraire* is towed to her last resting-place, she carries on board the souls of all the gallant sailors who once crowded her decks and made her the sharer of their glory. How that glory, though not forgotten, is become a hallowed memory, we see in Turner's picture.

The subject, there will be no question, is worthy of the greatest pictorial treatment. It is sufficiently emotional in itself to be independent of literary or realistic treatment. It is a matter for reflection rather than for history or record. In short, it is a fit subject for poetical symbols, be they the symbols of any of the arts. Think first of the objects included in the composition. The great ship, with her raised prow and beautiful lines, with towering masts crossed by furled sails, no more to be spread to the ocean breezes; the little tug, not unpicturesque, with round paddle-boxes and long chimney

pouring out a column of smoke; the sun low on the horizon, shooting out his rays above the low cloud; faintly seen in the distance a sailing ship, and a hulk looming black; in the foreground a buoy, and a few indistinct boats to the right. These, and the sunlight, are the contents of the picture. But how masterly is their arrangement. The principal group, the tug, the *Téméraire*, the sail of a yacht, and the distant merchantman, form a triangle of interest to the left of the picture, duplicated in their deep, resounding reflections in the calm water. The disk of the sun, repeated in the head of the buoy and in the distant hulk, form another triangle on the right, less in size because less in significance. Above, the rays of sunshine spread themselves into a similar shape, and one long beam of light leads to a bright space of illumination over the masts of the battleship. Another connecting line of light on the horizon takes the eye to the same object. Minor passages of pattern are built upon similar units of decorative shape. All is significance, nothing haphazard. Light and shade are equally emphatic. A brightly-lighted pennant gives a needed accent to the group of ships, a brilliant touch of reflected sunshine deepens the shadow of the buoy. And all shapes are simple, and the accents few and sharp. The definition of the objects is vague; representation stops short of actual imitation.

The colour is just as emotional and expressive. The sun sinks in gold and carmine splendour, which fades in the sky to pale yellow, tinged with pink. The distance is cool and vaporous, blue and grey. Judged by the standard of truth to natural appearance, there are faults which may be discovered by the most casual of spectators. Mr. Ruskin has referred to the unpleasant quality of the pigment; Sir Walter Armstrong to the fact that "the sun is lower in tone than the objects which are only rendered visible by its light"; and a sailor might point out certain nautical shortcomings. The first suggestion regarding the conception of the picture is recorded in the biographical section of this work, and the reader will marvel at an imagination which could take fire upon so accidental a suggestion. But when criticism is exhausted, and every objection urged, "The Fighting *Téméraire*" remains one of the greatest products of the British school in its balance of subject and treatment; its power of inducing feeling and reflection; and the solemnity of its general effect gained without losing a trace of glow and richness. It is a rhapsody in sunlight.

Now let us examine a picture based upon a somewhat similar motive,

PORTSMOUTH

"Harbours of England"

Painted 1828 *In Turner Collection.*

"Peace : Burial at Sea." It may be objected that these pictures would be more appropriately considered in the order of their production. But the object of these remarks is to show the power of Turner to use and order his pictorial symbols as they are used by modern painters, and in this respect the pictures of his later years are equal. "Peace : Burial at Sea" was painted to commemorate the death and funeral of Sir David Wilkie at sea. As it hangs in the Turner Collection it is octagonal in shape. The intolerable poem "The Fallacies of Hope" has again been drawn upon to epitomize the subject.

> The Midnight Torch gleamed o'er the steamer's side
> And Merit's corse was yielded to the tide.

Fortunately, the expression in pictorial language has greater dignity. Again, the objects in the composition may be enumerated. In the centre of the canvas rides a paddle-steamer with auxiliary sails. The sky with the last flush of sunset upon it contains a few filmy clouds. To the right appears the new moon, and on the left, reflected light from the blazing torches which assist the seamen to perform their solemn duty. The smoke from the funnel, rendered visible by the torchlight, streams to the left. The arrangement is simple and impressive. A broad band of light vertically crosses the dark mass of the ship and is repeated in its reflections. The black sails form square patches to the right of this light band, and the foresails, triangles of similar strength of tone. The mast carries up to the sky the line of light which, reflected, reaches to the foot of the canvas, and the smoke stream, and the inclination of the foresails, send a long diagonal line to the upper left of the picture : a satisfactory plan of firm lines connecting all parts of the composition. The light and shade are strongly opposed. It is said that when Stanfield commented upon the blackness of the sails, Turner replied, "If I could find anything blacker than black I'd use it." (Hamerton.) The general tone is an alternation of pearl and deep grey, except where in the exact centre of the picture the red and yellow torchlight gleams. Emphasis is placed once for all on this glowing patch of colour, and accents are fewer than ever ; the young moon, a stick of drift-wood, the black mast of a distant fishing smack, a rocket signal.

Again, the emotional effect is gained by purely pictorial means. Deep, indeed impassioned, feeling, is conveyed by the warmth and strength of colour; and thought and reflection, not mere sorrowful musing, are ensured

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by the firmness of the whole structure. Subject and treatment are wedded in an equal partnership in this monument to one whose art had, in the painter's youth, roused keen rivalry in his breast.

The pictures already described will have served to show that Turner, even had he proceeded no further towards abstract art, had fully understood the effect upon the mind and soul of the spectator of the use of pictorial symbols apart from their expression of the subject which occasioned it, or from the satisfaction of his own necessity for expression which was the first impulse. But he had still more to reveal, and still farther to travel towards symbolism and away from realism. "Rain, Steam, and Speed: the Great Western Railway" was considered by Mr. Monkhouse to be "the boldest attempt to represent abstract ideas in landscape that ever was made." In this picture the objects represented are so vague as almost to be formless. Running diagonally from the centre of the picture to the right lower corner is a lofty viaduct over a broad river, and upon it is a train with brightly glowing engine, travelling towards the spectator. In the distance to the left are seen indistinctly another bridge and a town. A wide plain stretches to the right, and a stormy rain-filled sky sweeps over all. A hare is leaping in terror before the advancing train. These are the objects which make up a picture which, in regard to light and colour, anticipated the most brilliant of the Impressionists. Anticipated and even surpassed ; for where in any picture of the Impressionist School can such a composition be found, or so masterly an assemblage of constituent details with so complete a unity ?

The difference between Turner and any painter of the Impressionist School, as shown in this picture (so closely resembling an Impressionist picture), is one of intention. The Impressionist reproduces the scene in Nature, according to his first rapid and vivid impression of it ; he is concerned therefore with the general effect, and must select by the use of his experienced eye, perhaps almost unconsciously, the essential characteristics which are to be recorded in his picture. These he will express by means of vigorous touches, without elaboration, in order to kindle in the mind of the spectator the same general rapid impression of the scene which he himself experienced. This, of course, would be impossible, were the painter to give prominence, by the representation of details, to any part of his work. The principle, then, which underlies all painting of landscape in the later nineteenth century, is selection from the numberless details of Nature of the characteristic features

of the scene. But Impressionism has another side. It does not attempt to paint the actual forms of objects as we know them by examination but to paint the light that reveals the form and colour of things to us. The appearance of forms in Nature as thus revealed by light is modified by the atmosphere between them and our eyes. And shadow is not an absence of light, but a light of less intensity. The Impressionist, therefore, does not mix his colours upon the palette, he paints with the colours of the spectrum, and allows them to blend at a certain distance, thus achieving a greater brilliancy. Instead of mixing his colours, he separates them. The result is that Impressionist pictures are representations of light rather than of shape and outline, and are composed in a higher key of colour than pictures painted according to former principles of painting.

"Rain, Steam, and Speed," though an essay in the painting of light and atmosphere, is not constructed upon these lines. The selection of the features of the scene is not a rapid impression formed at the time of the painting of the picture but is a combination of imagination and memory. It is not painted from Nature, but in the studio. The science of optics and the chemistry of pigments are not consciously employed. The gloom from which the train rushes towards us is more intensely dark than any Impressionist painter would allow himself to place on canvas, and yet the resulting effect is very similar. The similarity lies in the subject of the picture, in its suggestion of atmospheric effect. And its superiority, if superiority there be, to Impressionist art, is in its design. It is not, like that in any of Turner's earlier pictures, a conventional design that he has given us here, but in the concentration of brightness on the front of the railway engine, in the unequal but intentional diffusion of light in masses and gleams, it is arranged as carefully as the objects in his classical pictures. And the indistinctness of the objects is admirably calculated to give the desired effect of storm and speed. This picture is not an imitation, but an interpretation of Nature.

The object of this essay, to show the work of Turner as the foundation of the tendency towards abstract painting in our own time, would hardly have been effected had not this example of his entirely pictorial use of line and colour been reinforced by other pictures. "Rain, Steam, and Speed" was exhibited in 1844. Refer to the Venetian pictures of the few preceding years, the result of his labours from 1840 to 1843, which are reproduced in this volume. The first, " The Giudecca, Venice," shows Turner already far

removed from conventional representation. He is not attempting to give the forms of the buildings and the numerous boats and gondolas on the canal, so much as the conditions, luminous and atmospheric, under which they are seen, and, above all, to give us a pictorial equivalent for the light and colour of Venice, which no painter could possibly reproduce. There is still formality in the arrangement of the groups and in the placing of the buildings—or rather in the selection of the point from which the scene is viewed. But topography is entirely subordinate to the essentials of picture-making. Observe the domes rising in grandeur on the left and the group of boats under the walls ; then note the campanile with its own group a little nearer the centre, but farther in the distance; and next a spire again with its complement of buildings still to the right and still farther away from the spectator, and see how, as this interest recedes into indistinctness, until it seems composed only of coloured light and without form or substance, the sky becomes more charged with sunlight, in its expanded mass balancing the more concentrated light upon the basilica. See also how emphasis of light, irrespective of the action of natural sunlight, is placed upon certain objects —a quay to the right, a boat in the foreground, a floating log in the channel. This all recalls the practised matter of pictures, the artful management of detail so as to connect the sentences and the paragraphs of the story.

On the other hand, the glow of colour, the absolute permeation of the scene by light modified by atmosphere, the sparkle of reflections in water, are such as would be the endeavour of the most modern of painters to produce, however he might reduce and simplify. Turner has included nothing which was not essential to the effect of vibrating light and colour which he set out to attain.

Turn now to "Venice: The Dogana," of two years afterwards. Here, again, we have masterly grouping of boats and buildings, yet less important in regard to definition of form, and more use of them as objects for the incidence of light and colour. The composition is no longer dependent upon their shape and placing, but is now entirely a matter of the distribution of light in vapour and with little shadow. Such darkness of tone as now appears in the picture becomes intensely strong and concentrated. Turner is now striving to learn the mystery of light, as Rembrandt spent his later days in penetrating the mystery of shadow. And, in yielding to his desire for the exploration of this mystery, he tells us more of truth. In the "Giudecca" we

learnt what might have been truth, something of Nature " seen through a temperament"; but the "Dogana" leads us to subtleties of colour and atmosphere which neither the optical student nor the chemist can even suggest to us.

The third of this Venetian trio, " San Benedetto," is even more delicate and simple in its decorative scheme ; a design reduced to the essential touches. No work by Turner betrays more of his creative genius than this picture. In the wonderful sea and sky there is realistic painting sufficient to satisfy the most exacting conservative in art, and in that real sea and sky Turner has placed a fairy land of dissolving palaces and gliding gondolas and figures of dream. This he has achieved, not by means of form but by the suggestive and pictorial use of colour. If it is doubted that " Rain, Steam, and Speed," ploughed the furrow for abstract art, then this vision of Venice may be brought as evidence of his influence upon posterity.

By these three Venetian pictures we see that Turner's departure from naturalism and from representation was no accidental lapse, but an evolution of his principles ; inspired, imagined, and deliberate. But the fact which speaks still more clearly as to the advance in these works towards modern painting is their having been regarded as " little better than the freaks of a gifted madman," though to-day they are recognized as masterpieces. Similar remarks have been heard in our own time as to the works of recent painters.

There is, however, another way in which the reader may observe the progress of Turner towards more abstract art, and that is the way of comparison. Look first at "Crossing the Brook" (1815). It is evident even to those unfamiliar with Turner's pictures that this is a constructed work, and not a transcript of Nature. Those with more knowledge of paintings would at once ascribe it to the influence of Claude Lorrain. But its importance in this connexion is that it is a transition picture; it is the beginning, not of what eventually became the style by which we recognize a " Turner," but of his mature practice. At the time it was painted, Turner was forty years of age. Some celebrated painters lived their whole career in that period of time. If Turner had not been able to produce a masterpiece at forty he stood little chance of ever doing so. There is no doubt he was able, and did produce this masterpiece, but he had not overcome his ambition to rival Claude in his own province of classical painting, nor had he departed from the general tradition of landscape painting. The picture does, however, foreshadow

the greater Turner. The colour is not so full nor so independent as the colour of the "Ulysses," or still more, of the Venetian pictures. Nothing here presages the Impressionist, for vision is subordinate to rule and method, handed down from the French and Dutch painters. The shadows, not a less brilliant complement of the illuminated part of the picture, are conventional brown and dark grey ; even in what is intended for full sunlight we have pale blues, greens and greys. Indeed, there is here no attempt to paint the glitter and vibration of sunlight, but only the cool, soft, diffused light of an English scene under ordinary conditions. The lighting of the whole canvas is sober and broad, rather than emphatic or dramatic. But the distance, in its delicacy and beauty, in the extent of its range, has well been called "magical."

The truth of general tone in this picture, especially in the distance, does, nevertheless, anticipate the more original work of his later years. And the composition of the work, conventional and studied as it is, makes a splendid pictorial pattern. The *repoussoir* on the left—that brown tree which was the first concern of the early landscape painter—in its grace and lightness sets the scale for the whole. The rising group from the base of this tree to the right of the canvas gives weight and mass to the scheme. The bridge connects the background with it, and the winding river takes the eye into the receding distance. If any criticism could be offered about this picture, so perfect within its limited style of construction, it would be that the tones do not blend into each other, but remain separate and distinct grades of dark and light. But the distance shows that at this time Turner could introduce into his rivalry with Claude a new manner of interpreting Nature, which was in the end to reach the poetical warmth and fire of those Venetian works, in which the definition of foreground objects had been exchanged for truths about light and reflections, and feeling is more important than sight.

And now compare with this picture the "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage—Italy," a work exhibited in 1832. Here, as Mr. Hamerton points out, Turner was not confined to a particular locality, as he was in "Crossing the Brook." He attempted a combination of the characteristic details of Italian scenery. Had the "Childe Harold" been in better condition it would have been more apparent how important a link it forms in the chain of his development, and how all its details, freed from topographical limitations, have been used pictorially. That quality of infinity, which at least in regard to atmosphere

TOTNES

"Rivers of England"

Painted c. 1824. *In Turner Collection.*

he came to possess in the most ample degree of any painter in the world, is to be found in this picture. It is made up of conventions, but they are consistent and convincing. The use of a light key of colour, an innovation in regard to oil-paintings, is displayed here ; a lightness which as we have seen became more and more brilliant. The work contains some comparatively dark passages and spots, and these by strength of contrast force up the brightness of the sunlight. But Turner shows us the sunlight, which half hides and half discloses the landscape it illuminates. He allows it to pervade the scene with that general tone of fresh primrose yellow which gives so much enjoyment in his pictures. The deepest passages of shadow are in this picture full of warmth and transparency. In its romantic glamour, in its skilful use of brilliant spots of pure colour, it heralds Corot. In its composition, the use of picturesque ruined architecture, it harks back to Claude. Its colour-key and general truth of light and atmosphere aim at the Impressionist goal. But when all is said, "Childe Harold" is a real "Turner." No other painter could have achieved the exquisite gradation of the sky, or the melting tones of the distance. None other could have attained that unity of effect which forms so satisfying a range between the limited extremes of light and shade.

Thus we see, in the oil-paintings illustrated in this book, Turner's progress towards modern ideas of the use of pictorial symbols, from "Crossing the Brook," the first venture from the safety of tradition, to "Rain, Steam, and Speed," the harbour of unhampered emotion at which he arrived before old age and failing powers set bounds upon his genius.

Let us now trace the progress to the same end in the water-colours. The evolution of Turner's water-colour style is considered in another chapter, and will only be discussed at this stage in connexion with the point in question—the foreshadowing by him of modern ideas of picture-making. Taking the illustrations as examples, first let us examine "Norham Castle." This, one of the most famous of his drawings, was painted about 1822 or 1823, and was engraved in "The Rivers of England." It belongs to a period in his water-colour work when he began to paint in fuller and stronger colour. In Turner's hands water-colour had long been divorced from mere topography. He was inspired by Girtin, who had abandoned the monochrome underdrawing, and adopted the practice of painting at once in full colour. With "Norham Castle" we begin at a point when Turner had so mastered the technique of his craft

that he had nothing left to overcome. The small scale on which his water-colour pictures were constructed limited the ambition which had greater scope in his oil-paintings for grandeur and breadth of composition and design, and what progress he made in the more restricted art was in the direction of abstraction, which is the point it is sought to establish.

Perhaps, in water-colour, in spite of its limitations, there existed a more intimate affinity for the imaginative genius of Turner than in any other medium. That approach to the technique of Impressionism, though so widely different in pictorial intention, is more marked, because more deliberate and gradual, in the water-colours than in the oil-pictures. He departed from representation, not to leave himself free for a general impression, but in order to allow his imagination greater scope. He eventually passed the literalness of the French painters of sunlight in order to reach the pure symbolism of their successors. It is evident that in "Norham Castle" the artist has very much modified the actual scene in order to give meaning and importance to his composition. This is proved by the variation from other arrangements of the same material, and from the pencil-sketch upon which the picture was based. It is an entirely pictorial treatment and in no sense a transcription, or an attempt at local truth. If any one of his drawings is more fitted for illustration of Turner's pictorial use of his material than another it is this drawing of Norham. Sketched at a time when his interest in landscape was mainly topographical, when the chief object of his labour was to earn a living, "Norham Castle" was, at first, one of a series of designs intended to be engraved. Afterwards, as we have seen, a picture of it met with success, and caused in the artist an attachment to the place. If he had not regarded it as affording him the means of a pictorial composition, if from the beginning it had not appeared to him to contain the elements of grandeur and picturesqueness in an exceptional degree, he would not surely have rearranged its details in a manner so entirely different from the scene in Nature. His affection was no doubt rather for the possibilities it offered to him, than for the locality.

Many artists since Turner have painted the scene, for it has historical and national associations of a poignant kind. Not far from this ancient fortress is the fatal field of Flodden. But not one of these painters has given such wonderful pictorial meaning to river and hill and castle. Whether Turner was informed as to the story of the battle or not, there is in his drawing no

literary or historical allusion; the making of a picture was the only consideration. The arrangement of objects within the drawing is full of thought. The broad-based pyramid which rises from the river bank, in strength of construction and majesty of shape, might have appeared too near the centre of the picture for a composition of continual interest, had not its repetition in the reflected image altered the figure from a triangle to a diamond square, and sent diagonal lines thrusting vigorously to the four corners of the picture; relieved from geometrical formality by those apparently accidental accents or subordinate shapes which Turner knew so well how to introduce. The light and shade share the same masterly simplicity. All shadow is massed in the centre square, but it is shadow penetrated by light, and the sunlight, which gorgeous in the dawn illumines the scene and floods it with colour, is most brilliant where it meets the cone of shade made by the silhouetted building, an effect again repeated in the river's reflections. The colour scheme of gold and rose and blue is personal and restrained in its incidence and in its emotional warmth.

The picture, full of tender and moving beauty, is an example of the end to which a great artist may employ the details of landscape in the construction of a pictorial unity, complete in itself; its own subject; vital, and lyrical; expressed entirely by means of the painter's symbols. Far from having any resemblance to the work of the Impressionists, this drawing, on the other hand, has nothing in common with Claude. If there is any influence of the past to be discovered in it, Wilson is the only name that rises in remembrance; and here Turner far exceeds in life and intensity of feeling, in colour and design, in balance and repose, even the most beautiful pictures of the older master. So far as technique is concerned, this drawing marks an advance in water-colour handling to a point surpassing anything of the kind ever before achieved.

To proceed, turn now to "North Shields," another drawing for "The Rivers of England," of about the same date. Here the only topographical feature is a distant lighthouse. Any river may be substituted for the Tyne, and all that recalls Shields is the active group of sailors and colliers loading ships with coal. But in contrasted light and shade there is something dramatic about the drawing, which gives it character. This opposition is the key to the design. The bright moon, with clouds around it, receiving its gentle illumination, is the object of chief interest, and the radiating lines, firm and

rectilinear, or curved and soft, all lead to it. The vaporous atmosphere, the dark colliery smoke, give distance to the sky and to the horizon. Reflected moonlight and the flare of fires each add emphasis, one to the river, the other to the group of ships and boats. But in this drawing, which is not so noble nor so beautiful as the "Norham," the principal excellence lies in the sky, and this marks another advance towards modern painting in the mind of Turner. The great depth of the midnight sky, the sure modelling of the moonlit clouds, and their substance; the density and volume of the smoke are the result of countless observations of Nature from which the essential pictorial characteristics have been selected. Here is no transcription, nor any photographic naturalism. The definition of the whole scene is subordinate to the expression of these physical conditions. The Post-Impressionist could do no more to suggest the individual qualities of intangible things by the use of pictorial language. And beauty as well as significance has been achieved in the result.

At first sight "Totnes on the Dart," painted perhaps a year afterwards, might appear a return to naturalism, so minute and perfect is the finish of its workmanship. And if we were to accept the work of the Impressionists and their followers as the standard of modernism such an assumption would be reasonable. The pictorial intention, as distinguished from literary or sentimental associations is, however, what differentiates modern painting from that of former times, an intention which these innovators shared with Turner. It will not be difficult, then, to show that here is again a measure of progress towards the present-day idea of what painting should be. Finished as the drawing obviously is, it has thereby lost nothing of truth, nor anything of broad suggestion of greater things—that is, of infinity. That magical stillness of water, with its soft and pleasing reflections, the scale and depth which are given by the group of poplars in the centre, the simplicity of the great sail of the boat which heightens the feeling of repose, and the effect of broken colours in the flock of birds in the foreground, all are pictorial items of the utmost consequence. Their effect, and that of the massive mountainous clouds, are not in any way diminished by the careful execution of the whole work; such is Turner's sense of proportion and of relative importance.

One cannot help the impression that the drawing is more perfect in regard to colour, atmosphere, light and shadow, and balance of mass, in accent and emphasis of interest, than it is in rhythm of line. The line of the

foreground cliff on the left bank of the river is not particularly happy, nor is its repetition in the outline of the castellated hill inclining towards the church, especially as it opposes the upward curve of the cloud. There is less firmness in the background lines, and indeed, less significance in them than in some other of Turner's more finished water-colours. On the whole, however, the picture is so serene and lovely, it is so much a picture and so little a "view," that these usually important qualities are compensated for by the excellence of others. This drawing does, in an especial sense, convey a mood. The material has been transformed into poetical terms, even to a point of rhapsody.

"Portsmouth" again testifies to Turner's unconcern with actual topography at this period. This drawing was made in 1828 for "The Ports of England" series. Mr. Hamerton complains that the pictures of this series are out of sympathy with the titles, and that they relate more to groups of shipping and effects of weather and sea than to the places they professed to represent. He terms these plates "an excellent set of examples in the art of furnishing," and says that even the old Dutchmen, who were very clever in that department, never went so far—in allusion to rain-clouds, effects of sunshine and storm, and waves in turbulent motion. The town of Portsmouth certainly occupies but a small space in the picture, which really has for its subject the effect of wind upon the waves, and the great ship riding upon them. Bearing in mind, however, the pictorial use to which Turner turned so much of his study of the moods of Nature, and the variety of effects which he obtained from it, we shall regard these drawings less as disappointing views of coast and scenery than as another "Liber Studiorum," setting forth his opinions on the artistic treatment of the sea. "Portsmouth" has at least one defect in drawing, in the fore-shortening of the man-of-war, but it has beauty, and is typical of the series in which it is included. The colour is harmonious, and delicately graduated, the effect of light is brilliant and the unpaintable wind is suggested consistently throughout the drawing. In atmospheric quality it is one of the most vaporous of the works of this class. The gradual increase of density and the consequent modification of colour and light is especially truthful; the deepest shadows are luminous, the radiation of the composition is helpful to the expression of the breeziness of the scene, and the rise and fall of the waves is rhythmical. Such qualities, though they are possessed by pictures old as well as modern, are more often

found in the work of Turner than in that of his contemporaries, and are sought by those who study pictures, in the works of artists of the present day. Similar qualities may be discovered in "Dover," a drawing less studied, perhaps, and more impulsive; not so exquisite in modulation, nor so happy in regard to light and shade; but with a certain eagerness about it—see the schooner entering from the right, the very shorthand of painting—which is all its own.

Having considered the pictorial qualities of the water-colours of 1820–30, let us follow the art of Turner to the next decade, and observe how these qualities have been modified and developed. Among the most beautiful of his work is the series known as "The Rivers of France." The same objection has been made to this as to other series earlier in date of publication, that they are unfaithful to the appearance, and even to the spirit, of the scenery from which they were drawn. We shall find, however, in these incomparable little pictures, that whatever is the distance from literal fact they are the expression of Turner's emotion in the presence of unfamiliar landscapes which affected him profoundly. So far are they from being representation that they reach the opposite extreme, and have in the result the character of imaginative experiences. Mr. Monkhouse says, "they must be considered as poems in colour suggested by pictorial recollections of certain scenes on the rivers of France." This is the least that can be said of them, for surely in the work of no other painter is to be found so entirely personal, and spiritual, a treatment of natural "physiognomy." In these drawings he approaches more closely than ever before to the ideas of modern painters who have been trained in the Impressionist idea. They are splendid examples of the subordination of details to general effect, and masterly in their completeness; in the sureness with which the pencil is arrested when the desired effect is secured.

Drawn on grey paper, in body-colour, in a few tints—red, yellow, blue, and grey—there is no attempt to imitate the appearance of Nature; only to recombine the facts of that appearance in a delicious harmony. Light is the object of his endeavours, and in this series Turner abandons the transparent method of water-colour painting, which has hitherto been used by him in so luminous a manner, and turns to opaque pigment for the suggestion of that light. It must be remembered that the reason for the making of the drawings was the production of a series of designs for engravers,

ST. DENIS

"Rivers of France"

PARIS FROM THE BARRIER OF PASSY

"Rivers of France"

Painted c. 1833. *In Turner Collection.*

and much was left to them to supply in detail. Turner's experience in this matter was unique; he himself had trained a whole school of engravers, who had become thoroughly acquainted with his desires and intentions. But by this time his intentions had become thoroughly pictorial, and, aware that his engravers would understand and apply his indications in the work for which the drawings were commissioned, he abandoned himself to the joy of picture-making.

The reproductions from "The Rivers of France" series, then, show that Turner, though less abstract in them than in his later oil-paintings, and in some of the later water-colours, had always in mind the pictorial value of the scene he painted rather than the topographical presentment of it. His truth to the spirit of the landscape cannot be doubted; for, however neglectful, even contemptuous, he was regarding details of fact, there is no traveller who has viewed the country in the valleys of the Seine and Loire who does not immediately succumb to the charm of his drawings. They bring back to him the light, the atmosphere, the colour, and the characteristic features of the land. At the first glance, the drawings may appear to be mere sketches. It is only after study that they show themselves to be compositions so full of art, so imbued with character, as to rank among his most expressive designs. And if this is true of their composition—and perhaps those who desire close resemblance to the scene may not be convinced—how much more true is it in the matter of their colour.

In this respect conviction is reached at once. For there is no attempt whatever to record the local colour; and in this lies the secret of their appeal to lovers of art and of Nature alike. The painter who only records may be absolutely true to local colour and yet utterly fail to bring to the mind of the spectator the general impression of the scene. For the traveller who gazes upon one of Nature's vistas carries away in his memory a series of combinations, very few in number, rather than a multitude of clear-cut details. And when these memories become the material of imagination, as they do inevitably become, generalization masters fact, and the scene is simplified. In the practice of modern painters—and it is the object of these lines to show that Turner was one of the most modern in this respect—this process of simplification begins with the first conception of the picture. In Turner's drawings simplification is modified by an intensely emotional use of colour, as has already been said. He does not try to reproduce the actual

light of the sun, because he knows that to be impossible. What he does try to do is so to key his colour, and to contrast it, as to produce in the mind of the spectator of his picture the remembrance of that living light which both he and the artist know to be the source of colour.

This, then, is the object of "The French Rivers." To affect the imagination and to induce a repetition of the mood which possessed the mind of the painter at the time. And an examination of the illustrations to this book will afford instances. The drawing of the "Light Towers of the Hève" on the cover may be first considered. As has been pointed out by many students of the art of Turner, the actual appearance of the scene may be greatly different from its pictorial possibilities. Drawn on grey paper, in opaque colour, the vignette seems simplicity itself. And yet these few touches make up a design of great beauty. The moon, floating in clouds rendered warm and glowing by smoke and dense watery atmosphere, shines upon the water and traces a path of brilliant reflected light. The dark steamer, with streaming funnel, supplies that depth of strong shadow, small in volume, but rich in tone, which adds value to every stroke of colour. The brown cliffs, surmounted by the towers of white seen against the dark blue of the sky, in their economy of effort give grandeur of scale to the drawing. The sailing vessels and barges at their foot are arranged in pyramidical form, and admirably balance each other. And between them is a magical distance, poetically suggestive. But when all is said, again examine the drawing. It is complete, and yet the brush strokes may be counted. The grey paper upon which it is executed is responsible for the prevailing tone. A miracle has been wrought by the artist, who, with a few touches of white and blue and red, has created for us an ineffaceable impression, and one, despite its inaccuracy and its slightness, which brings back to us the first romantic delight of foreign travel.

And now follow the painter to "Vernon." This picture depends not at all upon the strangeness of the vignette. It seems far more intimately concerned with humanity than with the mysterious beauty of Nature. Human effort; the bridge, the castle, the distant church; and the gregarious attraction of association are incidents in the picture; in which, however, they are used for a purpose beyond their human nature. The bridge, as a pictorial factor, divides the oblong space into proportionate panels, prevented from formality by the two towers, and the building at the

left extremity. So also the nearer tower on the right arrests the bridge in its progress across the picture, and helps with the spire and the tree to make a pattern of shape and form. Lest these details should separate the picture too definitely into two parts, the masts of the boat in the foreground connect the bridge with the base, assisted by a few rays of reflected light near the centre. The weight of tone is concentrated on the right of the panel, but it is very artfully drawn along the foreground to its most intense spot, rather to the left of the centre. The colour of the drawing is, on the one hand, of extreme delicacy and, on the other hand, full and strong. Nothing could be more subtle than the tender greys of the sky, rising at the zenith to rose and gold. And on the right there glows a golden warmth, broken by spots of white and blue and red, much more heavy by contrast than the actual shades would warrant. All is keyed and related by the dark dress of the woman nearest to the boat. Again, the distance which the eye seems to penetrate the longer the drawing is studied adds the element of mystery which Turner knew so well how to suggest. No detail is clear, no point of execution is finished in the ordinary sense of the word. The indefiniteness which the light and atmosphere would render in Nature is entirely preserved, and preserved at a point consistent throughout the drawing. If the sky seems more exactly studied than the rest it is due to the fact that skies are always so distant that the presentation of their immensity is familiar. Had this drawing been an oil-picture of a reasonable size it might have been attributed to an Impressionist painter.

"The Post Road from Vernon to Mantes," in which, again, the grey paper fixes the tone, is even less studied and more spontaneous in appearance than the "Vernon." And yet, looking into its exquisitely tender colour, observe the wonderful recession of the distance, see how inevitably every touch of red and white occurs at the right place in order to guide the spectator into that distance; and see how simply the effect of warm sunshine is attained. How quickly the shadows have been put in, and how exactly placed, and how rhythmically reminiscent of the roadside poplars they are. Nothing more is finished in this drawing than in the others, yet to the mind the general impression is satisfying and complete.

A student of painting might examine the exhibitions of water-colour pictures in vain, even at the present day, for such a combination of truth to Nature along with rapidity and depth of impression.

If these drawings are so full of the essential beauty of Nature as they appear to be when closely studied, what is to be thought of the more powerful and solemn drawing of "St. Denis"? Mr. Monkhouse says that this series charms the sense of colour-harmony, although the colours are crude and disagreeable. The modern student, accustomed to a more symbolic use of colour, will not, perhaps, find any of Turner's colours in this series crude and disagreeable, but it may be said without fear of contradiction that the superb drawing of "St. Denis" charms no less in every detail of its tints than in the harmony of their combination. The profound blue depths of the shadows, the loveliness of the grey and rose and yellow shades of the lighter hues, are in themselves delicious. And their significance is as strong and memorable in the general effect. If the emotional use of colour is admitted—if, as in music, the combination of tones has power to carry the mind into realms of feeling quite beyond the range of ordinary experience —if the modern insistence upon pictorial rather than illustrative purpose in painting means anything at all—then such a drawing as this is a great work of poetry. Colour is in it so sensitive, so full of mystery and beauty, that the mind might well be satisfied with it; but its quality of design, its atmospheric fullness and aerial perspective, are quite as noteworthy. The proportion of space to space; the exact adjustment of the masses of light and shade to form a balanced composition; the skill with which the figures are introduced; all these are studied with a completeness that matches the best efforts of former painters.

What is new in Turner in such a drawing as "St. Denis" is the apparent artlessness; the subordination of natural fact to poetical imagination; the concentration upon the important characteristics of Nature, suppressing her accidental features—which proclaims him in his best period as the first of modern painters.

It is true that in later years he turned away, even from the resemblance to actual objects, which is here seen, and became possessed with a passion for the glory of sunlight; but it is doubtful whether at any period of his life he produced a work of greater pictorial inspiration than the drawing of "St. Denis"; so small in point of size, yet so great in achievement. The slightness of its technique is the result of a life-time's mastery in the expression of ideas; not one touch is superfluous, nor is one wanting for the utmost perfection of statement. If an example is needed of Turner's skill in the

transformation of the simplest accents into points of vital importance it would be found in the light peeping through a lancet in the castle on the right, and reflected in the water beneath. Had Whistler produced this symphony in blue and gold it would have been acclaimed a modern masterpiece. It not only includes the pictorial instinct which made Whistler's nocturnes so attractive to modern eyes, but it fulfils principles of design and composition which only Turner could accomplish. Not a single detail of the entire picture could possibly be thought of in any other position.

Now, to draw to a close this essay on Turner as a forerunner of modern painting, let us turn to the last of the French series here illustrated: "Paris from the Barrier of Passy." In this work the composition of Vernon is reversed. But the intention is different, and the scheme of colour is confined to a narrower range. The tones are blue or grey opposed to red, heightened with white, and made delicate and luminous by two small patches of black in the uniforms of the soldiers in the foreground. Once more topographical truth has been replaced by spiritual truth. The very soul of riverside Paris has been revealed to us. And with what charm and joyous gaiety the essence of the scene floats before us! For the barges, the buildings and bridges, and the river itself are of dreamland.

Those who have felt the fascination of Paris, who have steeped themselves in its romantic beauty, whose hearts return to it in moments of meditation as the home of all that is glamorous and splendid in memory, will love this drawing, though they know nothing of the laws of pictorial expression. And those who, in addition, are susceptible to the beauties of art, who recognize that the scene has been absorbed by the great artist and recreated through the medium of his temperament, will receive from it not only the impression which the city made upon their own feelings, but the emotion which Turner experienced as he set down the vision which remained after all that was irrelevant had faded from it. In this drawing atmospheric mystery has intensified knowledge of substance. The utmost tenderness of coloured air suggests vast distance to the mind and arouses sensations of wonder which the actual scene would dissipate. In execution the drawing is still more marvellous; and no lover of pictures will be content to admire without the presence of this element. It is one of the most important requirements in the painting of our day. Remark, then, the depth between the parapet in the foreground and the water below it; see how the

plane of the river recedes into the background; observe the infinite number of trees and buildings between the spectator and the far-off city; and note how the crowd of people on the quay sways excitedly. And then see how simply, yet with what mastery, the thing is done. The touches of white on the grey paper, which seem to rival the brilliance of light itself, so subdued is the general tone; the scarlet passages which indicate the excitement of the populace; the wash of opaque gold and rose pink which suffuses the scene with sunset radiance; all these are attained by rapid and skilful craftsmanship; the work of a painter who knew exactly how to translate his mental or emotional impression into form and colour with the greatest economy of means; economy not for the purpose of saving labour, but in order to guide the spectator with the least possible digression to the general truth and the poetry of the pictured idea.

A study of the illustrations to this volume will, it is hoped, support the opinion of the writer, that those pictorial principles which modern painters have adopted, largely owing to the example of the French Impressionists, and their followers the Post-Impressionists, had been anticipated by Turner. The remarks which have been attached to the various examples cited have been intended to point out different qualities in various instances, and a consideration of the accumulated exposition should, if it is sound, show that Turner in his later career had fathomed the depths of his art. He had discovered the pictorial and emotionally symbolic value of light and atmosphere, and if he was not aware of the physical innovations involved in this practice—a matter left for a subsequent school of painters to develop in juxtaposition of pure colour and "pointillism"—it may not be impertinent to observe that the finest painters among them were also ignorant of the scientific theories of these matters. He was as eager to convey truth as they, but his was a more poetical and less realistic truth. To say this is not to infer that Turner was not capable of imitating the appearance of Nature as truthfully as were the Impressionists, or the Pre-Raphaelites, who from another starting-point also aimed at truth to natural appearance. Not one of the painters of either school had a mind so fully charged with instances of natural fact.

But the radical difference lay in the fact that while imitation was the object of both schools, Turner at the last was not at all concerned with that function of the art of painting. He had reached a more abstract position;

NORTH SHIELDS

"Harbours of England"

Painted c. 1822-23. *In Turner Collection.*

a position not without resemblance to that of the Post-Impressionists of to-day, who, by another road, have arrived at a point in the art of painting where imitation is no longer the vital feature of picture-making.

Perhaps it is too much to say that any present-day painter is consciously influenced by the art of Turner; but there can be no doubt that, unconsciously, the landscape painting of Great Britain, to confine it to the smallest domain, would not have taken the same course had Turner never lived.

It is usual to trace British landscape to Constable—and he is an ancestor—but the qualities of imagination and comprehensive vision; the gifts of memory and observation; the surrender of all his powers to inspiration; which were the singular characteristics of the later Turner, have been, and probably always will be, the qualities which, whatever the momentary fashion in style, British painters will admire and emulate. And that simplification of means; that concentration upon essential matters; that purpose of arousing in the spectator of the picture thought and emotion deeper than works can evoke, and which only abstract art can conjure up, ruling our spirits as music rules them—which is the aim of picture-making to-day—may be found by the student in the painting of J. M. W. Turner.

CHAPTER VI

An Estimate of Turner in the light of Modern Painting

IT has been customary to divide the work of Turner into periods, somewhat arbitrarily defined, and to attribute to him certain distinct manners. It has been said that up to the year 1805 he was influenced by Wilson and the Dutch masters; that from then to the year 1819 he was guided by Claude Lorrain, that in the year 1819, after his Italian journey, he had perfected his own distinctive style; and that for the last twenty years of his life he was concerned in an unsuccessful and futile attempt to rival Nature herself in effects of light and colour. Though it is not a satisfactory classification of his pictures it may be usefully remembered in a consideration of his genius, exceptions and variations being noted.

To consider first, then, his oil-paintings. There is one curious aspect of the painting of Turner which seems to have characterized the greater part of his work during the first and second periods. It is the degree of imitation of the work of other artists which is to be discovered in his pictures—an imitation which was deliberate and unashamed. Had it been confined to an emulation of the virtues of these masters it would, perhaps, have been explicable and pardonable, for, at least as regards young artists, there can be no more hopeful plan of study than that of building upon the experience of the past. It is a somewhat regrettable feature of much present-day painting that the young artist, before even his technical education is complete, strives for an originality which often turns out false or ephemeral; aimed rather at creating sensation than sincerely and reverently seeking to give expression to matured thought and controlled imagination. Sometimes the painter follows fashion, as when he declines the enormous advantage to be derived from such a discovery as scientific perspective, or when he professes to have found that for centuries art has been travelling upon a wrong path, and turns to ancient China or pre-Renaissance Florence for example and inspiration, rejecting the patient inquiry and experiment of his immediate predecessors with the same contempt as he discards their failures and mistakes, wholesale and without discrimination.

Turner, while avoiding such presumption, imitated the faults as well as the excellences of his forerunners. And also, he did not confine his imitations to the great masters, for while he tried to paint in the style of such painters as Richard Wilson, Cuyp, Ruysdael, Poussin, and Claude, he devoted as much energy and observation to producing work after the manner of de Loutherbourg and Alexander Nasmyth. His object seemed to be not to explore the technical or the æsthetic principles of these painters so much as to achieve a conquest over their reputations in a spirit of vainglorious pride in his own power.

His earlier work, then, was conceived and executed in the spirit and methods of the Dutch painters and of Richard Wilson, and must be considered from that standpoint. It is not negligible on that account. Some of the most beautiful of his pictures were executed under the sway of these motives. His faculty of observation was so rapid and accurate, his memory so retentive, that he was able almost without trouble to reproduce the effects that had cost his exemplars a life-time's industry; and in spite of our natural wish that he had allowed his own individuality free play at an earlier stage in his career, there can be no doubt that his great genius did undoubtedly colour and enhance the result of his competition with the artistic celebrities of former years. It has been the case that the noble stateliness of Wilson's design has been forgotten, and his artificiality remembered; his beauty of light and shade has gone unnoticed and his darkness of tone has been condemned; the freshness and sweetness and atmospheric quality of his pictures painted from Nature have been ignored, while his more formal and constructed Italianized landscapes have been criticized; and yet, as the inevitable reaction proceeds—and what artist has not been the subject of such detraction and reaction?—we see that Richard Wilson was one of the most considerable artists of the English School. Further, that his manner and type of subject are capable of affording scope for the production of great works of art. The reaction against the late nineteenth-century dispraise of Wilson, like all reactions, has not risen to the height of the former appreciation of his work which arose at the time of his successful exhibition in 1814; but this much at any rate is assured. In choosing Wilson as the object of his emulation, the young Turner showed an admirable taste and judgment.

Of the Dutch painters to whom he was attracted, Cuyp, Ruysdael, Vandevelde and Hobbema were the chief. Cuyp's love of sunlight, and

his skill in painting it, no doubt turned the thoughts of the young English painter in the direction which led him to the luminous glory of his later years. Both were pre-occupied with the sky; both sought harmony—"The adorable harmony of this picture," says a French critic, speaking of Cuyp's "View of Dordrecht" at Amsterdam. Of the other Dutch influences upon Turner's early painting Vandevelde and Ruysdael both had the larger share of his admiration. In the case of Vandevelde it is the golden tone which pervades his pictures that we find imitated by Turner, as it is the storm and passion of Nature which Ruysdael expressed with such majesty that were the object of his attraction.

There were two other painters whose work profoundly affected the early work of Turner, and they were both British. The effect upon Turner of the great gifts of his friend, Thomas Girtin, no doubt concerned his water-colour drawings rather than his oil-paintings, and that will be considered later. The work of Sir Joshua Reynolds had drawn Turner's attention from his boyhood, and perhaps his influence was as much personal as artistic. As Sir Walter Armstrong points out, there was a similarity between the work of Sir Joshua and that of Wilson which possibly did not escape the notice of Turner. Later in his life, Turner, like Reynolds, made technical experiments with disastrous results to the permanence of his pictures, though with a different intention; Reynolds striving to penetrate the secrets of the old masters, while Turner flouted rules and formulas and introduced materials and methods of the most dangerous nature.

If we seek for examples of his imitations of earlier masters, or of his emulation of their principles and methods, we shall find ample material in the National Collections. To observe first the influence of his own countrymen, the reader is referred to No. 475 in the Catalogue of the Turner Collection, "View of a Town; a Sketch," in which the dark tones and formal arrangements of some of Wilson's pictures are strongly reminiscent. This picture was painted about the year 1798. Or take "Clapham Common," No. 468 (1802), which Sir Walter Armstrong attributes to the influence of Hobbema in regard to the scheme, and in regard to colour and handling to the influences of Wilson, Morland, or Hoppner. There are certainly indications of a study of the pictures of Wilson in the handling, and in the use of the diminutive figures, so valuable as a point of interest in the composition. Or again, refer to No. 467, "Sandbank with Gypsies—a Sketch" (before

1809), which might be a work of Crome. Of the Dutch influences, they are to be seen in the well-known "Shipwreck; Fishing boats endeavouring to rescue the Crew" (No. 476), painted in 1805, in which Vandevelde is dramatically outrivalled, though he remains still unapproached by Turner in certain qualities of light and atmosphere, and in "Calais Pier, with French Fishermen preparing for Sea; an English Packet arriving" (No. 472, National Gallery), painted in 1803, in which also he vies with the Dutch sea-painters, surpassing them in knowledge and life and movement, though falling short of something of their beauty. The early influence of Reynolds is clearly shown in No. 473, "The Holy Family," exhibited in 1803.

These, then, were the great painters upon whom Turner formed his early style and in comparison with whose pictures (his own challenge) his work may fairly be estimated. We may ask, did Turner, at this period, surpass, or fall short of any of his exemplars? Wilson's landscapes are mannered, especially in regard to the painting of trees, but he was admirably true in his rendering of atmosphere both in tone and colour, and his pictures painted in Italy are full of light, though time and climate have combined to darken many of his English pictures. It must be remembered that Wilson died in 1782, whilst Turner was born in 1775, so that he must have seen pictures by Wilson in fresher and brighter condition than they are at the present day, Wilson had a fine power of design, though his arrangement was "classical," in accordance with the taste of his time. But it was not merely classical, and his pictures are always luminous with a tender golden light. On occasions when he departed from tradition, and painted directly from Nature, as in Mrs. Lee's picture, "On the Wye," he attains a silvery quality foreshadowing that of Corot and the Barbizon painters.

As to composition, the classical manner long prevailed in Turner's art, whether due to the influence of Wilson or of Claude. The pictures of his first period, however they remind us of Wilson, do not in luminosity of colour and freedom of handling surpass those of the earlier master; though in vigour and strength they compare very favourably. It was the boldness and ambition of youth setting itself against the subtlety and experience of age, with the result that the charm of Wilson was not realized by his young disciple. There never can be a reproduction of the essential quality of a painter. The one thing necessary, the unity resulting from a combination of all his characteristics in their varying quantity, eludes the most searching

and sincere of students. Taking from the master those elements in his painting most congenial to his own temperament, the student builds upon them a structure of his own. What Turner retained of Wilson's genius was the design and balance of his composition. We cannot say that at the period of his emulation Turner surpassed Wilson, nor that he ever approached him in the qualities peculiar to Wilson's art.

If this is true in regard to Wilson it is no less true in relation to Sir Joshua Reynolds. It is again necessary to bear in mind that the sombre pictures which represent Reynolds to us were fresh and blooming at the time they roused the admiration of the young Turner. The quality which attracted Turner was, no doubt, that which directed the attention of Reynolds to Titian—glowing and harmonious colour and richness of shadow. (Turner had not yet attacked the mystery of light.) It was also Reynolds's practice of painting with a definite and limited palette or set of pigments.

A consideration of Turner's competition with the Dutch painters produces a more favourable result. Their peculiar quality of luminosity was simpler and easier to attain, and their object was more limited and less subtle. The ambition of Turner soared beyond the modest efforts of these painters. He saw that their art was selective, and resolved that his should be creative; theirs lyrical, his dramatic; always concerned with design he extracts from them that quality to apply to a far more ample subject-matter; even in this early period of imitation and emulation he develops the principles of these masters in his more imaginative way, gaining in variety what he loses in grandeur and dignity. The problem of sunlight, with which he became more and more concerned, here first attracted his genius. A golden and subdued light perhaps it was that these Dutch painters achieved—far short of the flaming glories of his own later pictures—and a penetration of light through hazy mists and vapours that they set themselves to interpret in all its dewy freshness. These things he studied in Van Goyen and in Cuyp: Ruysdael showed him the gravity and solemnity of Nature, as Vandevelde introduced him to the endless combinations of form and the everlasting interest of the sea, the ships that ride upon it, and the clouds that overshadow it. He did not succeed in repeating the features which gave to the pictures of these artists their individual excellence, but he retained from them certain things which enabled him to arrive at a personal expression of some aspects of Nature, an expression which, if not inevitable and calm as theirs,

DOVER

"Harbours of England"

Painted c. 1828. *In Turner Collection.*

was applied by a more dramatic and powerful impulse, and resulted in a force which they had never conceived.

By his thirtieth year, Turner had matched himself against the greatest of his predecessors in the domain of landscape art, and had shown himself worthy to range himself alongside the most gifted of them. Thus, had he proceeded no farther, Turner had arrived, in his first period, at a point from which any advance must demonstrate his superiority in certain respects to most of those who had preceded him.

The second period of Turner's greatness brings into view another and a stronger influence upon his art, that of Claude Gellée, known as Claude de Lorrain. As the student of painting must, sooner or later, trace the sources of style and inspiration and technical practice to Holland or to Italy, we find in Turner no exception to the rule. Turner, whoever he imitated or emulated, eventually followed his artistic pedigree to this fountain. As a student of Reynolds he studied at second-hand Correggio and Carravagio no less than Titian. As a follower of Wilson, he drew inspiration from Zuccarelli as well as from Guardi and Canaletti. In attempting to rival Morland and Crome he was at the same time the pupil of Cuyp and Ruysdael and Hobbema almost as much as when he applied himself to the actual works of these masters. And Claude also, in landscape the artistic descendant of Titian, was the medium through which he drew again the divine artistic breath of Italy. Even the most revolutionary art has this Dutch or Italian pedigree—the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists no less than the Classicists, though the road was through Spain.

The Italianized landscape of Claude aroused Turner's most fervent admiration, and again his ambition found a realm to conquer. Claude was, like Turner in his later years, infatuated with light, He had not Turner's sense of structure, nor his minute accuracy of observation. He had not the infinite variety of Turner nor his magnificence of imagination. As Mr. Hourticq says, "An ignorant and simple spirit, he was little concerned with the historic memories which breathe from Roman soil," but his poetical treatment of warm Mediterranean sunlight was of the most sweet and tender kind. He differed from Poussin and other painters of the French School in his classicism. It was not literary study of antiquity which animated him, but love for the charm of old ruins and the landscape which they adorned. These ruins were his aids to composition, his pattern for shadows, the frames

for that mellow sunlight which floods the middle and far distances of his pictures. The legends and events which give titles to his works merely serve to provide interesting groups of figures, and at times to determine the sympathetic tones of a picture intended to strike a gay, a tragic, or only a sombre scheme of colour or light and shade. His arrangement of the objects which constitute his picture has little variety, because his main object is to utter his rhapsody on his beloved sunlight.

This light, despite the sobriety due to time and varnish, is ever varied. Not even Claude Monet himself is more conscious of the infinite change which passes over the landscape at different hours of the day; nor more skilled in suggesting the differences in its general tone. Never before Claude's time, nor afterwards until Turner appeared, was the glow and sparkle and glitter of sunlight so faithfully felt and expressed. It was the radiance of Italian skies which aroused such intense emotion in the breasts of both these painters. This mystery of light which so intrigued the heart of Claude was not confined to his oil-paintings; it is as evident in the most insignificant of his drawings. Nor is his passion for light the only merit of his pictures. His management of significant lines in the composition of his pictures is finished and masterly, and his power in this matter is seen in his sketches perhaps more clearly than in some of his completed pictures. These sketches are the most useful guides to an estimate of Claude's art, for they prove his close study of Nature in many aspects; though his oil-pictures seem concerned with only a comparatively few of her phases.

The "heroic" treatment of landscape in his pictures is understood to be, after an examination of his drawings, a creative action, or perhaps a selective action, of his own. He uses formal symbols to express what he feels about Nature's most majestic moods. Sir Robert Witt is no doubt right when he says, in reference to the picture, "Cleopatra landing at Tarsus," in the Louvre : "Surely in this great painter's vision, the beauty of Nature at least is not invented, only revealed."

The influence of Claude upon Turner was profound and far-reaching. It is possible that had Turner never seen a picture by Claude his genius would have led him at last to attempt the conquest of the realms of light, but it is certain that that genius would not have taken the course it actually did take. It is one more example of the penetration of Turner's artistic instinct that he was almost the first Englishman to perceive in what lay the main

excellence of Claude's art. Not without many advocates and admirers in our country, the work of Claude was chiefly prized for those formal and decorous elements of composition and subject, of soberness of tone and serenity of general effect in which he must necessarily compete with his great countryman, Poussin, and the Italians upon whom he formed his style.

Even Turner himself—in "Crossing the Brook" (No. 497) for example—was at first drawn to the artificial manner in which Claude constructed his landscapes. And this is not remarkable, for these constructed landscapes are undoubtedly beautiful and satisfying in tone and arrangement. They are full of "taste"—a word dear to eighteenth-century Englishmen—and they show remarkable skill. They are harmonious, and they have the stately dignity of instrumental music of Purcell, Bach, Gluck, and Handel, however limited they are in range. These qualities were what Turner in his early manhood sought to combine more effectively than did Claude, and it was later in life that he set himself to excel the glory of light and light-pervaded atmosphere that makes the surpassing excellence of Claude's pictures.

To compare Turner with Claude in the period of his conscious emulation of the works of the great French artist is a difficult task, and yet it would have been necessary to attempt it had Turner developed further.

Before it is made it may be as well to observe the presence of another rivalry in Turner's career as a painter. In 1806 he exhibited "The Goddess of Discord Choosing the Apple of Contention in the Garden of the Hesperides" (No. 477). In this he had attempted to treat his subject in the manner of Nicholas Poussin. It is this circumstance which indicates how the mind of Turner first turned to Claude through the formality of composition and the medium of classical subject rather than through his mastery of light and air. There was nothing in the colour of Poussin that could appeal to Turner, already aware of the emotional power of colour. A born colourist, Turner from the first employed colour as an integral part of his design and not, as did Poussin, as an additional enhancement of his picture. The French painter was a correct draughtsman, without being a sensitive one. His tonality was of a very limited kind, harmonious largely because of its limitations. He was a great classical painter, for his sense of the importance of events and the scale upon which they should be represented was that of a scholar, if not of a poet. But he was sculpturesque in his conception, and his

works are all permeated with the painter's appreciation of the severe beauty of antique statues and bas-reliefs.

This austere and formal style, and this pre-occupation with history and legend, were the means by which Turner in his thirty-first year approached the more poetical style of Claude. After his essay in the style of Poussin he had digressed in order to measure his skill against that of Sir David Wilkie, "The Blacksmith's Shop," 1807 (No. 478), but in the same year there appeared "The Sun Rising through Vapour" (No. 479), a work which in his own considered opinion in his old age was worthy to hang alongside the finest work of Claude and for ever to uphold a comparison between the two painters. This picture is not painted in Claude's manner. It is a proof of the essential rightness of Turner's aims as an artist that he should have selected this as an example with which to demonstrate his superiority to the French painter. It is a picture to which there is no parallel in his production for many years afterwards, a foretaste of his own distinctive and matured manner, a successful attempt at the painting of sunlight under natural conditions of atmosphere. It is of very great interest to all students of his work to know that he purchased this picture in 1827 in order to bequeath it to the nation. He had found that that was the style in which he really succeeded, in which his genius found freest expression. He realized, what to-day we find to be true, that almost at his first attempt in this personal style he had achieved a masterpiece.

It is not possible to confine Turner's rivalries to periods, for he anticipated his later style in his earlier years, and from time to time he reverted to his various forms of admiration or competition regarding the works of other masters. But his long attachment to the classical style of Claude really seems to have begun with the inception of his "Liber Studiorum" in 1807. As Mr. Hamerton points out, the rivalry with Claude which he there instituted was not merely a rivalry in style but a rivalry in skill and imagination.

In 1811 he painted "Apollo and the Python" (No. 488), and in it he shows his amazing power of pictorial vision. This he had in a degree that seldom is to be found in painters—the faculty of thinking, dreaming, and meditating in the symbolic language of his own art. And in this translation of thought into form and colour he greatly excelled the painter he had resolved to emulate. This picture, like "The Sun Rising in Vapour" (which Turner deliberately pitted against Claude), contains much that

foreshadows his own characteristic style; it is more in regard to subject than to treatment that it has reference to Claude.

Mr. Hamerton points out in this connexion that Turner was vast in range and very unequal, and that Claude was narrow in range but remarkably regular in the degree of his technical success; and as an example of the differences between the two artists he instances "Dido building Carthage" (National Gallery), and "The Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba." He remarks that the Claude is light, fresh, full of atmosphere; that the Turner is heavy, and though, in a certain sense, imposing and magnificent, is entirely wanting in freshness, which, however, has been attained in many another picture, but the imposing splendour of his use of subject-matter in "Dido building Carthage" he never surpassed.

Turner felt the influence of Claude in regard to picture-construction down to a very late period, quite to "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," of 1832 (No. 516). But by this time imitation, even emulation, were past. Turner had built upon the style of Claude a style of his own, capable of expressing the great ideas of his powerful imagination. Still formal in the arrangement of his material, that material had grown in quantity as in quality vastly beyond the more modest content of Claude. No longer was even the semblance of topography assumed; the light, the atmosphere, the significant details of the scenery of Italy were assembled, combined, and transformed into pure beauty. It may be stated that here everything best in Claude and all that was best in Turner are blended. Turner had absorbed his master.

If then, in these modern days, it can be advanced that Turner equalled or surpassed the masters he admired in the sincerest of all forms, what is thought about the more personal manner of his later years? In the chapter dealing with the illustrations some points of this manner are discussed, and perhaps a consideration of his Italian pictures will best help us in the formation of this estimate of his genius. It is in these pictures that he appears as a colourist. Ruskin thought him among the few supreme colourists of the world, and at his best there can be no doubt that he was; though, as has been agreed, he was unequal. This colour gift of his had little reference to Nature as she is observed by ordinary beings. The colour with which Turner endows her is the essence, the distillation, the sublimation of natural colour. It is of precisely the same nature as the sound of the musician. This intangible physical property is absorbed and given forth again in such a personal

form as to appear a new creation. Turner's great search was for the power to express intensity of coloured light; and in this he has excelled all former painters. The French Impressionists made the same inquiry into the possibilities of painting light, and from a physical point of view they were, no doubt, more successful, because they proceeded in the end more scientifically. In the beginning, however, they were not scientific, and perhaps as artists they reached a higher level than their successors. We may, therefore, compare their results with those of Turner, who did certainly influence two of the most consummate artists of their school, Claude Monet and Camille Pisarro. Monet particularly aimed at achieving in paint the actual brilliance of sunlight, and he did attain a surprising brilliance; but his brilliance beside the tinted light of Turner is hard and unpoetical. Monet, with others of his school, sought for truth of representation, as has been said in another chapter, while Turner sought for a poetical truth, higher because more spiritual in intention. His was the light of imagination, he pushed his colour to the extreme end of the scale, not to imitate Nature but to realize the light of his dreams. There is no example of his later work in which this realization is not attempted.

These Venetian pictures, then, which are typical of his original contribution to art, are symphonies in colour. It cannot be too often repeated that they are the productions of imagination and that in them representation has altogether ceased. Half a century ago, even five-and-twenty years ago, such a remark would have been regarded as severe condemnation. To-day, in the light of modern painting, we are willing to accept abstraction, and to dispense with the imitation of Nature, because it touches emotions and kindles responsive imagination in a manner not experienced by our forerunners. Even those who are unable to go so far in their appreciation of modern painting are content with a much more rigorous simplification of detail; this mysterious power of enclosing it in an envelope of luminous atmosphere, and this musical treatment of colour, almost formless, are the gifts of Turner to our day. Few painters of the younger generation are content to copy Nature, all are searching for the relief from the tyranny of imitating forms and local colours. Imagination has greater scope, when it is fortunately possessed, than ever before, and this is due in a great measure to the example of Turner.

Let us now turn to a consideration of the water-colours. It has been

already noted that Thomas Girtin greatly inspired Turner in the use of water-colour, and that their mutual rivalry in this form of painting freed it from the slavery of representation, and enabled it to be accepted by painters as a medium no less expressive than oil-painting. Fired by Girtin's example, Turner raised to the power of full colour what had in former days been the merest echo of it. Drawing had hitherto been the principal end of water-colour, and the tints and washes applied to the drawing were intended not to reproduce the colour of Nature, nor to create beauty by the harmony and relationship of the several hues, but to act upon the spectator by the force of suggestion. This suggestion, however, was destined for a definite and not a symbolic or mysterious purpose. It was a confession that the art was too limited for the end which was sought to be attained, and that the actual colour of Nature was to be supplied, not by the imagination, but by the recollection of the spectator who viewed the picture. No mystery was sought, however mysterious the effect might be.

Some of these drawings are among the most beautiful productions of our early artists, but their beauty is the result of a severe limitation of the resources of the painter. A little reflection will at once enforce this point; for all the colours which were available to Girtin and Turner were available to many of their predecessors. The early draughtsmen were largely topographers, working for the publishers of engravings, and their colours were indications to their brother artists who worked upon the copper and steel, of the depth of light and shade necessary for the reproduction of the drawing. Until Girtin's day, the water-colour draughtsman was not an independent artist, though his productions often reached the rank of works of art. But being really an artist, and not merely a topographer, the water-colourist refined upon the medium, which he used in the first instance for a less noble purpose.

The influence of Girtin upon Turner was to turn his thoughts to the development of this limited art into a vehicle for the expression of his unbounded imagination. It must be recognized, however, that Girtin's impression upon the art was not only technical it was also æsthetic. In regard to the pictorial treatment of landscape, Girtin showed the way to the men of his generation. In this volume are reproduced several examples of Turner's French series which, though so much later in point of date than any work by Girtin, bring to mind that artist's delightful drawings of

Paris, as much in their summary execution as in their seizure of the essential pictorial details of the scene. Though Turner very much over-estimated the position of his friend as an artist, for in regard to imaginative power and poetical suggestion he was far less great than he, yet he was right in his belief that Girtin was only at the beginning of his achievement as a water-colour painter when his short career came to an end.

Having, in pursuance of Girtin's exploration of the possibilities of water-colour, developed it to the full extent of its power; having added to its technique devices to increase its vigour and brilliancy; after producing many notable works greatly in advance of anything before his time Turner at last perceived in what resided the peculiar expressive nature of the medium. He saw that it allowed a particular delicacy and grace which the painter in oils might despair of achieving with his less transparent material; that it allowed personal characteristics and emotions to be expressed in a manner more subtle and suggestive than did any other branch of painting, particularly in regard to sky and atmosphere; and while not so powerful as an aid to the rendering of strength and character as oil-painting, it was especially valuable in the interpretation of beauty. An examination of Turner's water-colours will convince the student that beauty was almost always, until near the end of his life, his prepossession when he painted in water-colour. His art in oils was very often—almost always—dramatic; his water-colours are invariably lyrical.

Perhaps in this distinction lies the difference in the capabilities of the two, especially as practised by Turner. The speed with which an effect may be secured allows the first inspiration to be immediately expressed in water-colour. It is most effective in light keys of colour, and is therefore less potent to express grandeur or solemnity. It can suggest infinity of vision, though deep psychological import is denied to it. Its tints are capable of exquisite blending and gradation, and its transparency reveals the brilliance of the ground upon which it is painted. When we look at one of Turner's water-colour pictures we are conscious of the execution of the work. We take a personal interest in it, as if we had seen it painted. So we should feel in reading a ballad or a sonnet; in the depths of its consummate and concealed art we perceive the nature of its structure, and are interested in every stage of its mastery of the form.

This is the case with regard to the water-colour painting of Turner, and

he is the pioneer who extended its possibilities. And he developed it in another way. In his French series he used it for poetical purposes, higher even than the expression of his lyrical joy in Nature. These drawings are still lyrical, but they reflect a joy, not of vision but of reflection; and in this Turner showed a power for the medium which it had not before possessed. For interpretations, however imaginatively modified, of scenes in Nature, based upon actual places, for sketches intended as aids to memory in the production of pictures, he had used it with force and skill; now, having accomplished the mastery of its technique, he was able to make it a more abstract means of arriving at the expression of phases of personal emotion.

It has been pertinently said by Mr. Walter Shaw Sparrow that there is a retrospective character in some of Turner's later pictures, and that in his water-colours completed between the years 1820–4 he returns to the joys of his Alpine tours of twenty years earlier. There is no doubt an emotional reason for this, but more probably it is due to the fact that his enhanced power of treatment in later life gave him the power to execute his earlier dreams and ideas with greater freedom. Some drawings of the middle period have already been discussed in this book, and a few remarks upon the later drawings may complete the estimate which was there attempted. It may be said at once that they are amongst the most individual productions in the whole range of painting.

Derivative as many of his oil-paintings were, even at an advanced point in his career, Turner's water-colours, as soon as the tinted drawing had been abandoned, were invariably stamped with his own personal manner, both of vision and of execution. The National Collection affords the opportunity of observing to what a length this personal manner was to lead him. Such late sketches as "Arth, from the Lake of Zug" and "Bridge and Alpine Pass" still retain a certain regard for form and structure, fairy-like and delicate as their colour is; but in "Venice, Entrance to the Grand Canal," the structure is only indicated in the faintest manner, and colour, in glowing luminous harmony, is of paramount importance. Still more is this to be noticed in "Venice, the Grand Canal, looking back to the Salute," where, though light and colour are composed in tones and masses, the buildings seem to float between sky and water. An examination of the later water-colours tends to show that in this branch of art also, Turner sought to express that intense concentration upon the beauty and significance of light

which characterizes the oil-paintings of the same period. In these he is as successful, if not more so, in affecting our feelings æsthetically.

Something of grandeur and dramatic force is, no doubt, wanting, for the nature of the medium will not allow of pressing to the same pitch of intensity; but, on the other hand, there is an ethereal effect in the case of water-colour which seems to give greater freedom to the expression of certain kinds of spiritual experience. At least, it appears, in the practice of Turner, to be capable of this effect. There may be doubts as to the position which the art of Turner, as a painter in oils, will ultimately occupy in the estimation of connoisseurs in a comparative survey of painting; there can be none in regard to his position as a water-colourist; for, since his death, neither beauty nor significance has found by this means so inspired an interpreter.

In the biographical section of this work some account has been given of the inception and execution of Turner's great project, the "Liber Studiorum," and for further details the reader is referred to Mr. Rawlinson's analysis of the drawings and plates. An estimate of Turner, as he is regarded to-day by students of his art, would, however, be incomplete without some conclusions as to the value of the scheme. So much has been said, by Mr. Ruskin and others, regarding its literary meaning, that the purely artistic quality of the prints has been rather overwhelmed in the chorus of praise. And the matter has importance, because many of the plates were engraved or worked upon by Turner himself.

Turner's personal work upon the plates of the "Liber Studiorum" is a matter of concern to all who would make a complete survey of his art. He was a skilled mezzotint engraver, though not so eminent in that branch of art as he was in others. He was therefore able to judge how far that medium could go in the expression of his ideas. And it is evident, as the work proceeds, that he was dissatisfied with its power. Not content to submit to its limitations, he eventually abandoned his project. As Mr. C. F. Bell says, "the ardent desire for qualities unattainable in mezzotint, brilliancy of tone, and intricacy of detail, which had long been taking form in his mind and matured almost suddenly after his return from Rome, breathes from every canvas and sketch he afterwards touched."

It will thus be inferred that the "Liber Studiorum" is a reflection of the artistic development of the painter during the years (1807–19) of its production, and deserves to be studied in that relationship. He himself

says, "What is the use of them but together?" in reference to a desire on the part of collectors to acquire the prints they especially preferred. It has been pointed out by Mr. Ruskin, amongst others, that the "Liber Studiorum" is gloomy and pessimistic, but to agree with this view is to import into the art of Turner intentions which, to say the least, are doubtful. Mr. Ruskin assumes that he was inspired by literary or moral ideas, and he does not give sufficient importance to his pictorial qualities. It would seem that Turner projected the work as an exhibition of his power over landscape composition of all kinds. The dark appearance of the plates as they are seen together is very largely due to the process of engraving, and, as said above, was noted by the artist himself. It is true that the figures introduced into many of his subjects have a tragic or solemn incident associated with them. But it is to be remembered that the whole work was planned with reference to the art of Claude, and that classical art usually dealt with subjects of the kind.

The chief merit of the series is its wonderful range and variety, and the breadth of general effect to be found in all the plates. And in those which relate to classical story there are proofs of the profound study which Turner had made of the works of the great masters. As a whole, the plates of the "Liber Studiorum," though at the present day regarded with less veneration than they were a generation or two ago, enhance his reputation. The wonderful development of etching and engraving in our time has turned the attention of collectors to contemporary artists, and from them to their inspirers of centuries ago; but the student will return to the "Liber Studiorum" and its sequel by Sir Frank Short, in order to observe how some of the most magnificent conceptions of Turner's genius are expressed in terms of light and shade and line. Regarded as a great colourist—and in that field to many minds supreme—Turner shows, in the "Liber Studiorum," that his command of detail in the building up of complicated, yet unified, designs is no less powerful than his mastery of more purely emotional resources.

An estimate of Turner in the light of modern painting may be summarized, then, by calling attention to the qualities in which he is still unsurpassed; the intellectual force of his design; the emotional suggestion of his colour; the fertility of his invention; and his pictorial power of combining them into unity. In addition, a study of his whole production will reveal the principles which still remain the unshakable foundations of the art of painting.

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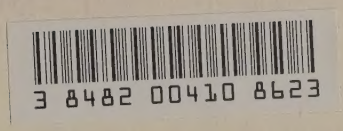
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